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An Old New England Church

By

Frank Samuel Child

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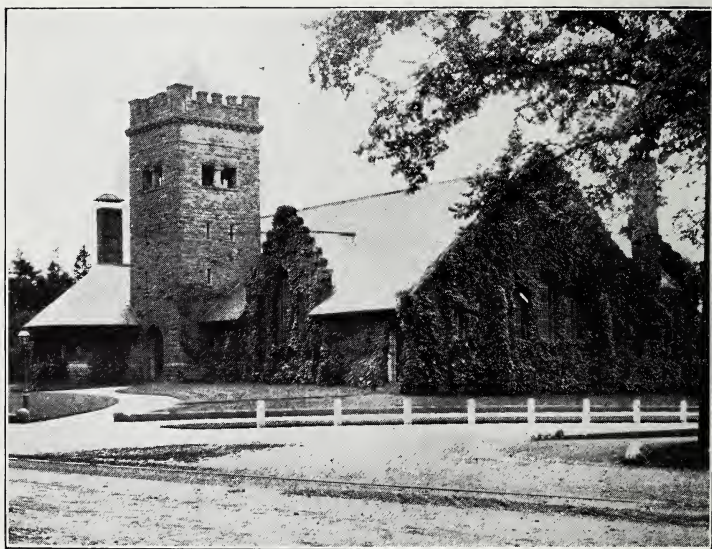


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THE SIXTH HOUSE OF WORSHIP

AN OLD NEW ENGLAND CHURCH

ESTABLISHED RELIGION IN CONNECTICUT

BEING AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST AND
THE PRIME ANCIENT SOCIETY, FAIRFIELD, COMMEMORATING
THE TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP
IN THE TOWN

BY

FRANK SAMUEL CHILD D. D.,

ILLUSTRATED

FAIRFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
CONNECTICUT

1910

THE PRICE OF THIS BOOK IS ONE DOLLAR IN CLOTH AND
SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS IN PAPER COVERS.

Mr. J. Sanford Saltus has kindly rendered financial assistance in the publication of this book

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BY
FRANK SAMUEL CHILD

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To

JUDGE ROGER M SHERMAN

CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR AND STATESMAN

AND

HIS LOYAL BENEFICENT COMPANION

ELIZABETH GOULD SHERMAN

WHO PERPETUATED THEIR HOME FOR THE MINISTERS

OF THE PARISH

SHERMAN PARSONAGE

JANUARY FIRST

1910

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- Memorial of Thomas B. Osborne.
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 Palmer's Historical Discourse on the First Congregational
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 Davies' Historical Discourse in Greens Farms, 1839.
 Peter Parley's Reminiscences.
 Beardsley's History of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.
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- Child's "The First Meeting in Stratfield." An Historical Address on The Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Fairfield Consociation.
- 



A SUMMARY OF DATES—FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST.

Organization of Public Worship	1639
Erection of Log Meeting-House	1640
Installation of Rev. John Jones—First Pastor	1644
Approval of Hooker's "Survey" by the Church	1645
Meeting-House rebuilt	1663
Death of Rev. John Jones	1664
Installation of Rev. Samuel Wakeman—Second Pastor	1665
Appointment of Mr. Wakeman by General Court (with other ministers) to meet and "consider some ex- pedient for our peace"	1668
The Church in Fairfield follows the "Half-Way Cov- enant"	1669
Meeting-House altered and repaired	1671-80
Election Sermon before the General Court in Hartford by the Rev. Samuel Wakeman, May 14th	1683
Decease of Mr. Wakeman	1692
Installation of Rev. Joseph Webb	1694
Organization of the Church in Stratfield (First Church, Bridgeport)	1695
New Meeting-House finished	1698
Mr. Webb assists in founding Yale College	1700-1
Fairfield Consociation formed—the representatives from this Church being Mr. Webb, Deacon John Thomson and Mr. Samuel Cobbett	1709
Parish of West Farms (Greens Farms) set off	1711
Parish of Greenfield Hill set off	1725
Parish of Redding organized	1729
Death of Mr. Webb	1732
Installation of Rev. Noah Hobart	1733

General Association of Colony of Connecticut at Fairfield	1743
New Meeting-House ordered to be built on site of the old House—the new edifice to be 60 feet long, 44 feet wide, 26 feet high, with steeple 120 feet high	1747
“A Serious Address to Members of the Episcopal Separation in New England” by Rev. Noah Hobart, published	1748
Election Sermon before the General Court by Mr. Hobart, printed	1750
“A Second Address to the Members of the Episcopal Separation in New England,” by Mr. Hobart, published	1751
Mr. Hobart elected Moderator of the General Association	1753
“Principles of the Congregational Churches” by Noah Hobart, published	1754
Norfield Parish set off	1757
North Fairfield Parish set off	1767
The Death of Noah Hobart brings to its end a pastorate of forty years	1773
Installation of Rev. Andrew Eliot	1774
General Association of Connecticut convened in Fairfield	1777
Capture of Deacon Silliman by the British on the night of May 1st	1779
Meeting-House burned in the Conflagration of the Town July 9th	1778
Public Worship held in private houses	1779
The New Court House used for Public Worship	1780
Public Worship conducted in the unfinished Meeting-House	1786
Andrew Eliot a member of Committee on Union between Congregational and Presbyterian Churches	1790

"Voted and agreed that the Society Committee take some convenient opportunity (after all the pews are built), to set up warnings for venduing the Pews in the Meeting-House for ready money"— Society Records	1790
Demise of Rev. Andrew Eliot	1805
Installation of Rev. Heman Humphrey	1807
Disuse of the Half-Way Covenant	1807
New Confession of Faith and New Covenant Adopted	1807
General Association of Connecticut meets in Fairfield	1811
Mr. Humphrey appointed by Consociation on Committee to prepare a Public Address on Intemperance	1813
Mr. Humphrey publishes a Series of Articles on the subject of Intemperance	1813
Fairfield Charitable Society organized at the residence of Mrs. David Hull the first Thursday of June	1815
Rev. Nathaniel Hewit succeeds Mr. Humphrey in the Pastorate	1818
Congregationalism the Established Religion of Connecticut, is dis-established by Law	1818
The Female Prayer Meeting Society was organized at the Home of Mrs. Nathaniel Hewit in March (This Society was formed through the influence of Mrs. Hewit, the accomplished daughter of U. S. Senator Hillhouse.)	1821
The Sunday School becomes a flourishing part of the Church	1825
Dr. Hewit is elected Secretary of the American Temperance Society	1827
Rev. John Hunter installed Pastor	1828
Westport Congregational Church is organized	1832
Rev. Lyman Atwater succeeds Mr. Hunter	1835
The Congregational Church of Southport is organized	1843

Judge Roger M. Sherman, a deacon of the Church, bequeathes his mansion and nine acres of land to the Prime Ancient Society, to be used after Mrs. Sherman's death, as a home for the minister of the Parish	1844
The Congregational Church at Black Rock is organized	1848
Fifth House of Worship is erected by the Prime Ancient Society	1849
Dr. Atwater is elected to the Chair of Logic in Princeton College	1854
Dr. Willis Lord becomes pastor of this Church	1854
Dr. Lord is made Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Northwest, Chicago	1856
Rev. Alexander McLean is installed Pastor	1857
The Chapel is erected on the lawn adjoining the Church	1858
Dr. McLean called to the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Buffalo	1866
Rev. E. E. Rankin D. D. installed Pastor	1866
Hope Chapel erected in Jennings Woods	1872
First Volume of Church Records copied by Miss Hannah Hobart	1873
(On the old vellum cover of the original book was the following inscription—"This Booke of Records belongs to ye Church of Christ in Fairfield of which I am Pastor, Joseph Webb. Bought in ye year 1704, cost, 6, 8 in money, paid for by ye Church.")	
The Church re-decorated—stained glass windows placed—doors removed from the pews	1875
The Centennial of the Burning of Fairfield observed—Historical Discourse delivered by Dr. Rankin	1879
Rev. George S. Burroughs succeeds Dr. Rankin in the pastorate	1880

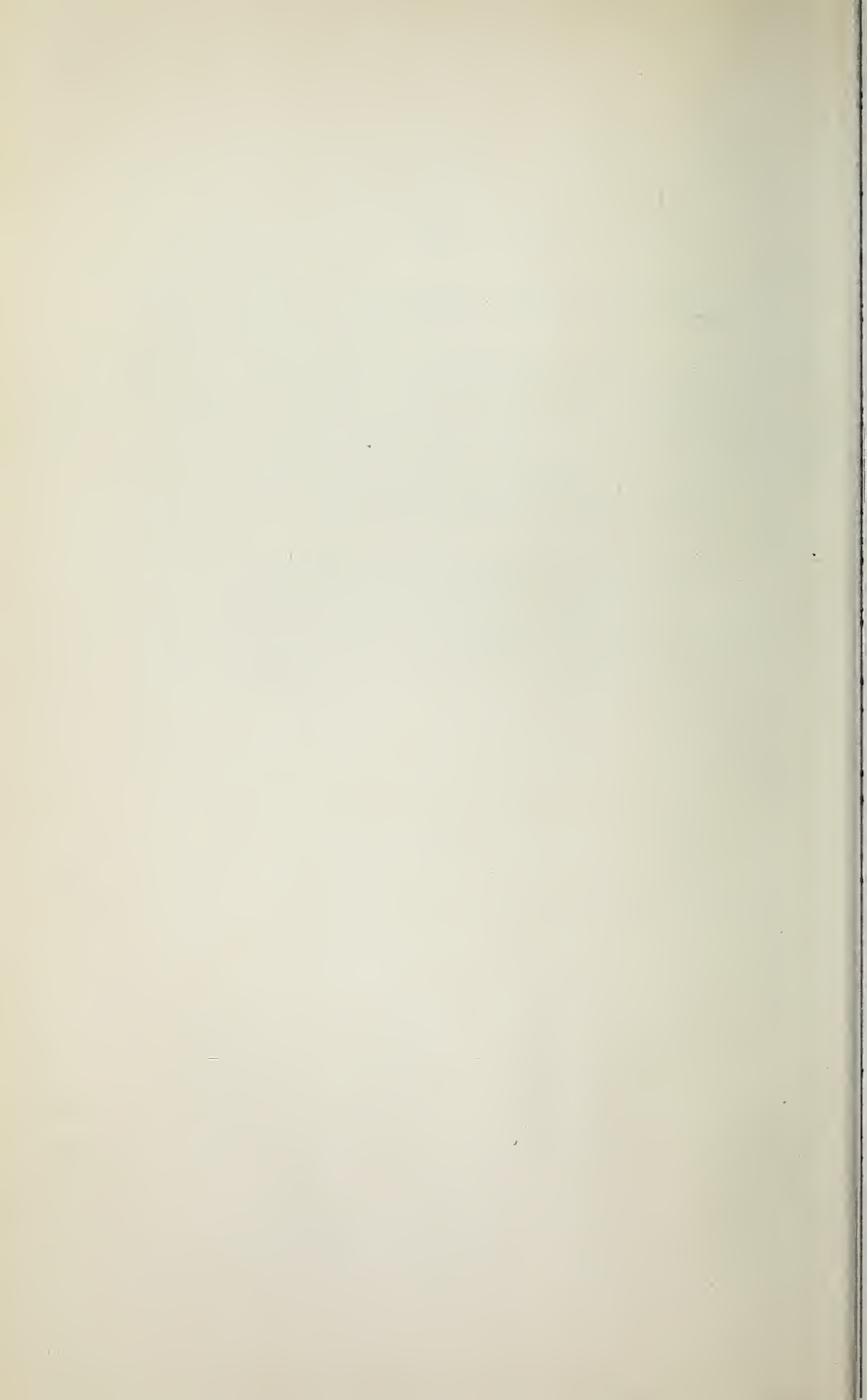
A SUMMARY OF DATES

XIX

Public Worship conducted at Hope Chapel by students from the Yale Divinity School	1880
Mr. Burroughs receives the degree of Ph. D. from Princeton College	1883
Dr. Burroughs accepts a call to the pastorate of the of the First Congregational Church of New Britain	1884
Rev. John E. Bushnell is installed Pastor June 30th	1884
The Church Parlors erected	1885
The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor organized	1888
Mr. Bushnell accepts a call to the Presbyterian Church of Rye, N. Y.	1888
Rev. Frank S. Child begins his ministry November 15	1888
The Prime Ancient Society commemorates the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary	1889
"The Children's Mid-Week Service"—A Catechetical Exercise—published	1889
Sketch of the Prime Ancient Society is printed	1890
The Fifth House of worship burned on the night of May 29th and the morning of May 30th	1890
Corner Stone of the Stone Church is laid May 2nd	1891
"Church Work" published	1891
Dedication of the Sixth Sanctuary, May 2nd	1892
Fresh Air Home instituted	1892
"The Friendship of Jesus" published	1894
New Church Manual issued	1895
"The Colonial Parson of New England" published	1896
Sherman Parsonage renovated and the Sherman books and papers arranged for a Memorial in the old Library of Judge Sherman	1904
The Church grants the Pastor a six months' vacation for the purpose of travel in Egypt, Palestine and Europe	1906
An Historical Tablet containing the names of Pastors	

who have served the Parish is placed in the vestibule of the Church	1906
"Ministers of the Prime Ancient Society" by Frank S. Child is published	1906
The new Fresh Air Home is erected and used	1906
Jewel glass windows are placed in the north end of the Church in memory of Deacon Oliver B. Jennings and Mrs. Esther J. Jennings	1908
"A jewel glass window in memory of Rev. Andrew Eliot A. M., is placed in the west transept of the Church	1909
"A Church of the Established Religion in Connecticut"—An Historical Sketch by Frank S. Child—is published in commemoration of the Two Hundred and Seventieth Anniversary of Public Worship in Fairfield	1910





A Church of The Established Religion in Connecticut

CHAPTER I.

RELIGION ESTABLISHED BY LAW IN CONNECTICUT.



UNION of church and state in the colony was the natural expression of life. The Puritan ideal did not picture a relation of absolute independence. Many of the first planters simply protested against the corruption and tyranny of the Church of England while they

retained a measure of affection for the Establishment. When circumstances favored the organization of churches on a primitive model like that of the church in Plymouth, the brethren followed the practice with which they were familiar and ordered that the church should be supported by a common tax in the town. The brief experiment of a voluntary church support had failed. It was not long before a Religious Establishment became thoroughly intrenched here in Connecticut. The General Court gave the planters permission or a command to organize a church in each of the various settlements. The little company of believers covenanted together, elected their officers and ordained the minister. The men in town meeting voted the rate necessary for the minister's salary, set apart for his use parsonage land, appointed the collector and managed all the business affairs of the Society.

In respect to matters purely spiritual the church as a church had its voice, but the early history of religion in this colony shows that the men acting in civil capacity had chief shaping influence over the church. The example set by the English parish seemed

paramount. The pioneers yielded unconsciously perhaps to the traditions and customs which prevailed in the mother country.

A sketch of the life running through the succeeding generations in Fairfield, discloses the various methods and changes in New England Congregationalism and distinctly traces the stages of development in thought, polity and experience. A strong church planted in an elect, rural community which exercised leadership during important, formative periods in American history is called to contribute in generous way to the great movements of the time. It is therefore interesting to observe the spirit of action and the course of events in a church which has touched life closely through the entire history of Congregationalism in America and at the same time has been so happily situated in a quiet, cultured, influential town, that the church has retained its essential character, developing the underlying principles of our faith and polity in a normal, systematic and harmonious way.

Here we feel the urgent, healthful impulse which moved a pioneer community of high-minded, congenial people to organize a Church of Christ in the simplest form, according to the New Testament pattern.

They had recently emigrated from a country where Church and State were united. They did not protest against such union but against certain ecclesiastical abuses and persecutions. They naturally therefore reared their little state in the most intimate association with the church. The time came when the larger thought concerning liberty prevailed. Church and State became in a sense independent of each other and men were given the privileges of worship irrespective of form or creed. Meanwhile the Established Religion of Connecticut passed through noteworthy transitions, subjected to a thorough sifting process and strenuous discipline. Its polity grew more complex, a necessary adaptation to the needs of passing generations. Its articles of

faith were re-adjusted by advancing thought, a fresh interpretation being given to life.

We now hear little concerning meeting-houses. We call our places of worship, churches. The rigid simplicity of primitive days has yielded to the ornate and dignified expression of wide spread culture. The leadership necessarily connected with an exalted office is a thing of the past. Leadership in this later century belongs to the man who achieves it.

We are members of the ninth generation in the succession of men who have contributed to the history of this Church, in the succession of men who have been nourished by this venerable, and vigorous Society. What is the message and lesson of these many years?



CHAPTER II.

THE PRIME ANCIENT SOCIETY.

THE Prime Ancient Society was a name given by our New England forefathers to the first ecclesiastical organization in town. The phrase has an historic flavor. It suggests early, strenuous beginnings, the struggles and triumphs of many worthy adventurers, the lay-out of the original plantations and settlements, and a lodgment for the Church of Christ in the vast mysterious wilderness of the west.

It was with heart-ache that the fathers said farewell to mother country. They loved the old, familiar associations, well-tilled fields, trim hedge-rows that were the nesting-places of birds, comfortable homes and pleasant villages, gray massive architecture of public buildings and picturesque dominating castles. These things all had a certain charm for the eye and a practical or sentimental worth. But the staunch, thoughtful emigrants tore themselves away from the dear old home, braved unfriendly seas, tarried a few months on the edge of the forest in the neighborhood of Boston, Watertown and Concord, and then with their women and children, their precious household goods and their cattle, plunged into the trackless wilderness in search of their Promised Land.

When Rodger Ludlow purchased from the Indians in 1639 the tract called Uncoa, a transaction finally approved by the General Court, his purpose was to follow the lead of other town fathers in Connecticut and organize a settlement which would enjoy a fair degree of civil and religious liberty ; but the fundamental principles of such liberty had not yet been stated in fullness and the logical outcome was a thing that passed all imagination.

Fairfield, the name given to this new home of adventurous planters in 1645, ultimately extended from the Stratford line on the east to the Norwalk line on the west, its territory running back into the thickly wooded hills some twelve miles from the seashore. These boundaries describe the original parish. A patent confirming this purchase was granted to the proprietors in possession by the General Court of Connecticut, May 25th, 1685, a quit-claim deed having been previously executed by the Indians.

Ludlow, Lieut-Governor of Connecticut, a man of purpose, knowledge, energy, ambitious and confident, was not dilatory we feel assured, in pushing forward the tasks of town and church organization; but the records of these first movements and transactions have been lost.

The men who shaped political and religious affairs those days were the same so that church and state became practically identical in the colony. The town of Fairfield was the parochial territory of the minister. And no sooner had the new comers erected their log cabins and stockaded the little neighborhood gathered about the Green than they began to extend their borders, taking possession of lands farther and farther away, until the bold, aggressive pioneers were widely scattered through the parish.

The Church of Christ was the name used by the fathers in organizing these first religious societies of New England. This church has been known by that name during its entire history, the later descriptive word Congregational never having been adopted by any vote that I have been able to discover. So there are two descriptive titles which serve these venerable organizations—the Prime Ancient Society, designating the people when ordering the business affairs of the parish, and the Church of Christ, designating the people when engaged in the exercise of their spiritual privileges.

A larger liberty was granted to the settlers in Connecticut, than that enjoyed by Massachusetts colonists. Church members

alone had the privileges of the franchise in the older colony. Connecticut allowed others than church members to vote although it was speedily enacted that a close relation should exist between church and state and all the property owners in each settlement must share the burden of taxation for the support of the Established Religion. The first church was the church which ministered to the needs of all planters in the town. The planters were with few exceptions christian men driven to exile by harassing conditions in the home country. The town or parish church was the one which came near to the realization of their ideal—its independence, fellowship, primitive forms and simple methods forcibly interpreting their spirit of protest against the tyranny and oppression of the English Establishment.

Eight generations have passed since this town was legally constituted. The original parish has been divided and sub-divided many times. The people in the eastern part of Fairfield, bordering on Stratford, first expressed the wish for a distinct organization. This was in the year 1690. The petition to the General Court was signed by forty-six tax payers of this town and thirteen from Stratford. There existed a natural reluctance on the part of the people here to set off such a thriving portion of the parish and carve out a new parish, but the request was finally granted in 1695 and what is now called the First Church of Bridgeport was organized.

A second division of territory was made when Compo and Maximus had gained a considerable population—nearly three hundred people—in 1711. These worshippers travelled three, or five or eight miles on foot, on horseback or in ox-cart in order to reach the Meeting-House on the Green. Roads were rough and the way seemed long. So their appeal for more convenient church privileges was granted and the Greens Farms church came into service.

A third movement of similar character took place in 1725, when the people of Greenfield Hill, petitioned the General Court

for the organization of a separate church. This embraced the northern part of the parish including a portion of Redding.

The action of these petitioners seemed to spur on the people who lived in the extreme limits of the original parish, for only four years elapsed before the church of Redding was organized in 1729.

The people of Weston had long felt the burden of weary travel and infrequent ministerial visitation, so they besought the Legislature in 1757 to give them relief and another parish was organized, Mr. Samuel Sherwood of Fairfield being ordained to the pastorate.


That section of the town now known as Easton was set apart as a new parish in 1763, and called New Fairfield. The church was organized with nine male members including the first pastor, Rev. James Johnson, and the Council "owned them" as a consociated church.

That part of the original Fairfield parish known as Westport organized a separate church in 1832, Southport in 1843, and Black Rock in 1848. Meanwhile the old parish has passed through numerous important changes. The once thickly wooded territory is studded with well-tilled farms, prosperous industries and beautiful villages, while the suburbs of a neighboring city encroach until generous portions of contiguous territory are now controlled by Bridgeport.

The mother church whose ministry once sufficed for the undivided town now shares its labors with eleven or twelve other churches of the same faith, while thirteen or fourteen churches of other denominations join with the First Church of Christ in Fairfield and her associates in the evangelization and religious training of the original parish.

How striking the contrast between the scene two hundred and sixty years ago and the scene which discloses itself to-day? A little square Meeting-House on the rough stump-scarred Green in Fairfield, was then the center of community life. Wild

beasts, stealthy Indians and adventurous settlers held common possession and often faced each other in stern conflict. What can a handful of men do with such circumstances and conditions? The curtain falls—the curtain lifts again. There are twenty thousand people and more tarrying in peaceful homes scattered through the length and breadth of the original grant, prosperous, intelligent and contented. Religion ministers through numerous churches, schools, beneficent institutions, consecrated men and women. The dream which Roger Ludlow dreamed—a dream of happy homes, beautiful landscapes, political and religious liberty, a fair field for the gleaning of life's most precious harvests has come true. The plantation which he founded has yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The History of the Prime Ancient Society is a narrative which forcibly illustrates the normal, harmonious development of a christian community in free America—the growth of a wonderful seed, carried across an ocean and planted in the soil of an untamed wilderness.



CHAPTER III.

FIRST ADVENTURERS IN UNCOA.

THE men who shaped the early life of this settlement are well worth a tribute from us. The master spirit was Roger Ludlow, who served Massachusetts and Connecticut twenty-four years in the very prime of his life. His father, a gentleman, Thomas Ludlow, Knight—uncle to Sir Henry Ludlow member of the long Parliament in 1640, and a great-uncle to Sir Edmund Ludlow, a Lieutenant-General and member of Parliament—his father gave him precious heritage of extraordinary natural abilities. A student at Balliol College, Oxford in 1610, and in the Inner Temple 1612, Roger Ludlow, was equipped as few contemporary adventurers in respect to intellectual gifts, thorough training and enriching experience, when at the age of forty, he sailed for America. All that birth, station, education, research, political ferment, and religious exercise could do for the making of a leader, had been done for him when he gave himself to his varied tasks in the land of his adoption. It fell to his lot to serve as a leader on various occasions—a founder of towns, a magistrate, a commissioner, a legislator, a codifier of laws, a military commander, a new world statesman and churchman—and he discharged these several offices with vigor and knowledge and generally with acceptance, although his hot temper and high-handed ways sometimes involved him in trouble.

It is an honor to be loyally treasured by our town that a man of such distinction and power fathered the original settlement and contributed with such generosity to its primitive lay-out and early features, imparting to it the stamp of his laudable purpose and broad culture. The town of Fairfield and the colony of Connecticut owe an unforgettable debt to this great man. It was

Ludlow who yielded to the charm of this landscape and chose Uncoa as the site of his plantation. He purchased the territory from native savages and piloted associate adventurers to the place. He advised and assisted in all the labors incident to founding and developing a wilderness home. Active in church and state, lawyer, farmer, instructor, zealot, he easily turned his hand to each demand. What a pity that his ruffled spirit forbade him to live out his full measure of days in the town which he had established! But his last days under Cromwell must have given him a certain precious satisfaction for he stood forth the champion of the same principles in the mother country that had forced him across the sea into this land of anticipated liberty.

There were between thirty and forty of these first settlers who were associated with Roger Ludlow coming from Wethersfield, Windsor and the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

In 1644 the Rev. John Jones with more than twenty men from Concord, increased the little Fairfield settlement and gave new impulse to growth and hopefulness. Religious services had been conducted by one and another godly man during these years of waiting for a shepherd. The first meeting-house, a rude, small log building, was erected before this second band of immigrants arrived, probably in the year following the settlement of the town, serving the secular purpose of a town hall interchangeably with that of humble sanctuary in which public worship was enjoyed.

There was further increase in the population of Fairfield prior to 1650 by the advent of some fifty men who made their way from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and Agawam. The restriction put upon settlers in the Bay Colony worked to the advantage of the Connecticut settlers. Many of the strong, staunch men tarried only for a brief season in the Boston neighborhood. They were eager for the better opportunity afforded by conditions here. It was therefore a notable company of intelligent, earnest people which gave fine character to primitive Fair-

field. Not that all was peace in the town through the formative years, not that great trials and sore were unknown. A community of independent, well-to-do, aggressive individuals will exhibit wide variety of views and plans. Temper will get the better of opinionated, energetic workers. The saints themselves are not perfect. The art of protest had been practiced through a long course of years in the old country and these men continued like exercise in the new. We must not look for meekness and repose among these anxious brethren who are fighting for life itself.

Andrew Ward was a typical helper in the work of shaping life in the young community. An ambitious, restless man, coming of good stock and possessing a fair amount of worldly goods, he served a thorough apprenticeship in founding towns and managing affairs before he settled in Fairfield. Watertown, Wethersfield and Stamford had profited by his counsels and labors. When he was chosen to represent the last town of his adoption in the General Court at Hartford, he went among old associates and shared tasks with which he had already become familiar. His activity shows that he gained the confidence of people in the several towns. So far as the record reveals the man we judge that he deserved the honors which he carried. As a trusted citizen, a loyal friend, a public spirited individual, a tireless contributor to the forward movement of his day, he takes high place in the early history of this settlement.

In 1637 Jehue Burr was appointed by the General Court of Connecticut tax gatherer for Agawam, the same year in which Andrew Ward filled the office for Wethersfield. Later these two men were associated in Fairfield. Soon after the removal of Jehue Burr to this place, he was chosen to represent the town at the General Court. This honor indicates the standing of the man. Repeatedly during the later years he held positions of public trust. His interest in education was shown by the fact that he served as committee-man to co-operate with a commission ap-

pointed by the New England Colonies for the founding and maintenance of good schools and other places of learning. The faithful discharge of duty seemed to be a characteristic of the man. The records of his activity are meagre but they speak plainly concerning a reliable, worthy citizen, a man whose judgment was highly valued, a man heartily sharing the burdens of his day.


The roster of conspicuous names is a long one. Men like those already mentioned joined forces in organizing and upbuilding the settlement. Their honored descendants have scattered to the four quarters of the country. Hill and Hull, Barlow and Bulkley, Pinkney and Perry, Jennings and Jesup, Sturges and Sherwood, Osborn, Rowland, Pell, Wheeler, Silliman, Wakeman, Read, Bradley, Sanford, Adams, Lockwood, Morehouse, Hoyt and Cable, this is simply the beginning of the catalogue. The high places of the nation have been filled by the representatives of these families. Great work was done in the early, formative years when Fairfield stood shoulder to shoulder with half a dozen settlements in a fight for good government, lofty ideals, a pure Christianity and a free people. No better, stronger men served their day and generation than the men who planted and upbuilt this settlement. A narrative of life in the church witnesses most forcibly to the fine character and splendid service of these christian patriots.

A typical co-worker appeared in the person of the "Worshipful" Nathan Gold. This gentleman was one of the nineteen persons "principally interested in our Colony or Plantation of Connecticut in New England" who petitioned King Charles in 1674 to grant the Charter which gave such extraordinary rights and privileges to Connecticut. He was a man of considerable estate who speedily came to the front in serving with efficiency both state and church. Ensign, Assistant, Magistrate, "Leftenant," Judge and Major, he filled all these offices with dignity and acceptance, and labored unceasingly upon commissions and

committees in the development of parish and colony. The MS. sermon now in the possession of the Fairfield Historical Society, which his pastor, the Rev. Joseph Webb, preached in the meeting-house on the fourth of March 1694, testifies to the character and standing of the man. It was a tribute, by implication, to the virtues of "The Pious and Worthy Magistrate Major Nathan Gold," although the name of the deceased pioneer is not mentioned. A brave, thoughtful citizen, representing the best impulses of the heart, faithful alike in trivial and important tasks, wise in counsel and energetic in action, devout and spiritual, he made deep impress upon the generations which he served. Such men, says Mr. Webb, are "Pillars and Shields," the "Strength and Defence of a people by their prayers and instructions." As the preacher, using for his text 2nd Kings 15-14, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horseman thereof," dwelt on the theme, it was most earnestly set forth, "That we are this day under the terrible rebuke of God; that God hath not only formerly but lately written bitter things against us in this place, I suppose none of us is ignorant." "Such a providence as this I could not by any means silently pass over, but would take such notice of it as to endeavor some spiritual improvement of and benefit by it." After explaining the text Mr. Webb states as his "first doctrine" that "pious men of public use and place must die as well as others," therefore let us "beware of having too great dependence upon them," let us "pray God He will raise us up and qualify other men to fill their places," let us "work to secure the friendship and presence of an unchangeable God.

The "second doctrine" is "that pious and holy men, especially those in public capacity, are the fathers, the glory and strength of people among whom they live." In the "application" Mr. Webb declares that the "folly and wretchedness is exceeding great" of those "who are weary of righteous ones." It remains for us to give our worthy leaders the "love, esteem, honor which their being such call for."

The spirit of this discourse indicates the feeling which prevailed among the ministers. Leadership subjects a man to criticism and assault. However wise, strong, helpful he may be, any surrounding hedge of worth and usefulness fails to shield him from the hatred and opposition of wicked men. The thriving Fairfield parish seems to have been as free from strife and divisive elements as any in the colony, but the condition of religion here when Mr. Webb paid his tribute to Major Gold, was described by the word "sinking." Worldliness had entered on the flood time of prosperity. The great, good men were not able to breast the oncoming forces. They met opposition at every turn. There was a deep-seated conviction that Satan had much to do with the course of affairs in the new world. Witchcraft was one of the forms in which the Evil One vexed and harrassed people. There were some twenty trials for this reputed crime in the colony, several of them in Fairfield. Roger Ludlow was a firm believer in the black art. The imagination and credulity of people ran riot for nearly two generations in this place. The days of ungodliness, intemperance, immorality and crime drew on apace. The young colony faced perplexing and perilous conditions.



CHAPTER IV.

THINGS FUNDAMENTAL.

THIS first period in the history of our church extends from 1639, the year of Roger Ludlow's advent to 1708, the date when the Legislature called the Synod at Saybrook.

The principles which guided and governed the church during the early years of its life are stated in Hooker's "Survey." This concise and lucid writing by the ablest minister of his day in New England interpreted the common view and sentiment of the Connecticut planters. A church has God for its "efficient cause," "visible saints" for "its material cause," and the church covenant as its "formal cause." Each congregation, properly constituted, has sufficient power in itself to exercise the power of the keys and all church discipline. Ordination is a solemn installing of an officer into the office unto which he was called by a particular congregation. All children of church members are to be baptized. Consociation of churches is to be used when required—such councils being allowed to counsel and admonish other churches—and disfellowship them if circumstances compel it.

Referring to this "Survey" Hooker writes—"In all these I have leave to profess the joint judgment of all the Elders upon the river ; of New Haven, Guilford, Milford, Stratford, Fairfield. . . . At a common meeting—that in Cambridge, July 1st, 1645, "I was desired by them all," continues Hooker, "to publish what now I do."

It becomes evident from this testimony that the church in Fairfield, (the name Uncoa had been dropped the preceding year 1644) had good standing among the sister churches of the colonists and was reckoned a constituent member in the larger fel-

lowship of faith. A letter from the Rev. John Jones to Governor Winthrcp, however shows that the church here was still weak—the settlement necessarily cramped—and the future problematical.

FAIRFIELD, Mar. 5, '46 (-7).

Sr. Yours of Feb. 22 I received, being very sorrye yt my absence from home at ye time when yor messenger came hither, hath deprived of soe fit an opportunity of returning an answeare. I perceuve by ytletter yt Adam ye Indian hath informed yow how ye case stands with me. And, indeed I, despairing of a convenient passage unto yow before ye spring, did engage myself to keep a lecture here vntill ye season of ye yeare would permit me to remoue, so that my engagements here being ended with the winter, it is my desire and full resolution (if God permit) to take ye first opportunity of coming to yow, either by land or water. For other passages in yor letter I hope to answeare them by word of mouth shortly. In ye meantime I desire yor praies for ye guidance of heawen, & with my seruice & respects being duly rendered to yor selfe & Mrs. Winthrope, with love to all yor little one & little Margaret I remaine

Yors in all observance, John Jones."

But Mr. Jones remained in the settlement to which he had been invited and continued his fruitful ministry.


The Puritan planters who settled this town had once been reckoned as members of the Church of England in the Home Country. They had protested vehemently, indignantly against the errors and evils which threatened the life of the Established Religion, but their protests seemed in vain. Immigration was a last resort. The freedom of America pledged them the enjoyment of a religion pure in spirit, doctrine and form. It was their thought to transplant into the new territory of the west, religion divested of its unworthy and degrading incumbrances.

The first minister in Fairfield was an ordained clergyman of the English Church, just as the pastors of the other contempo-

rary churches in this Colony and Massachusetts with few exceptions were ministers Episcopally ordained. The form which the new churches organized on these shores assumed, was probably the result of circumstances rather than the fruit of pre-meditation in many cases. The example of Plymouth influenced Salem. Salem set the example for her neighbors. The practice of Massachusetts Bay helped to determine the course of churches in Connecticut. The Puritan protest begotten in England and transferred to New England, in the Providence of God, shaped itself into the vigorous life and simple forms of what is called Congregationalism.

A study of the New Testament methods convinced Pilgrim and Puritan on these shores that perhaps the best way in which to organize the church and conduct public worship was that which reverted to the plain, matter-of fact procedure of the early disciples. So when the people came down from the settlements on the Connecticut river and founded Fairfield, the church was organized by these people who, reared as members of the Church of England, now covenanted together after the Plymouth fashion. Officers were elected—the ruling elder and deacons—and the little congregation met stately for praise and prayer and instruction. Mr. Hooker of Hartford, set forth distinctly and explicitly in his "Survey" the cardinal principles of the Faith as interpreted by the brethren. Although a clergyman of the Church of England, it had been revealed to him that the church was other than that institution alone which had mothered them in religion. The protest of these men respecting abuses and corruptions in the Established Church culminated in complete separation from the National Church and the organization of independent churches—the ministers submitting to a fresh laying on of hands in their settlement over a parish—the laymen sharing the management of affairs after a way that had been suggested by the example of the Separatists in Scrooby and Amsterdam.

When the first pastor was called to this church he found it already organized, carrying forward its work through the activities of the laymen. The minister became the natural leader, a brother among brethren, exercising no priestly functions but simply superintending the religious life of the community, conducting worship and instructing the people. Such a thing as voluntary support of the church was unknown. It is true that for a time no tax was laid. But the town built the meeting-house and when the question of settling a minister arose it was the town which voted a tax for his support. A state church was established as the orderly, conventional arrangement. Every town must have its church and minister. The government of the colony assumed the oversight. The Fundamental Orders were enacted. The General Court gave settlers the privilege of organizing towns and churches, and the General Court was ultimate authority in matters political and religious.



CHAPTER V.

ADOPTION OF THE HALF-WAY COVENANT.

TROUBLES in Massachusetts Bay Colony resulted in calling the Cambridge Synod. It had become apparent that conflicting elements in the young churches must test strength and settle disquieting questions. The part taken by the Connecticut brethren was not conspicuous, but the results of the several conferences gained acceptance among these churches so that the Cambridge Platform shaped affairs here until another Synod convened and issued its later statement of faith and articles of discipline. Fairfield stood square with the work of Cambridge. The influence of the Synod helped to determine the character and action of this Church through many years.

The change of thought in respect to baptism and covenant privileges was marked in this parish quite as early as in other parts of New England. But discussion conducted with evident decorum and fairness, favored the larger liberty.

The complexion of the plantation was necessarily altered by the influx of men whose ideas and principles did not come up to the first standard of the original Puritan settlers. Time had also modified the views of several early planters. So when a desire was expressed on the part of men who did not walk in full fellowship with the church that their children might be baptized, the prevailing sentiment agreed that such a course was to be commended.

The ferment in Connecticut was such that the General Court took action and on May 16th, 1668 requested the reverend pastors, James Fitch of Norwich, Gershom Bulkley of Wethersfield, Joseph Eliot of Guilford and Samuel Wakeman of Fairfield to meet at Saybrook or Norwich on June 8th or 9th and "consider

of some expedient for our peace, by searching out the rule and thereby clearing up how farre the churches and people may walke together within themselves and one with another in the fellowship and order of the Gospel, notwithstanding some various apprehensions amonge them in matters of discipline respecting membership and baptism."

In accordance with this appointment of the Connecticut Legislature these four picked men met and deliberated, presenting at the next session of the Court a "returne"—a document probably conciliatory in its tenor, for the assembled law-makers passed a vote which solved, so far as the government was concerned, the Half-Way Covenant dispute. "This Court . . . doe declare that whereas the Congregational Churches in these parts for the general of their profession and practice haue hitherto been approued, we can do no less than still approue and countenance the same to be without disturbance vntil better light in an orderly way doth appeare; but yet forasmuch as sundry persons of worth for prudence and piety amongst us are otherwise perswaded . . . This Court doth declare that all such persons being allso approued according to lawes as orthodox and sound in the fundamentals of Christian religion may haue allowance of their perswasion and profession in church wayes or assemblies without disturbance."

This was a movement toward toleration—a movement in which Mr. Wakeman generously shared—a movement in which we may rest assured the pastor of this church represented the general drift of life in his parish.

It soon became the common practice for people who had not entered into full covenant relations with this church, to "own the covenant," have their names written in the parish register, take their part in the management of the church's business affairs and present their children for baptism.

This "owning the covenant" was a personal acceptance of Christ on the part of an individual who did not profess conver-

sion—a declaration of purpose to lead a christian life, attend public worship and pay heed to the discipline of the church. It resulted in large numbers identifying themselves with the Established Religion—in various parishes the majority of adults connected with the church being “Half-Way Covenant” christians. It gradually assumed a somewhat formal character, losing its early, solemn import. It became a divisive and unhappy factor in many parishes.

But the practice prevailed in Fairfield during a period of nearly one hundred and fifty years, the accepted and unquestioned convention of our church. Candidates for this pastorate were particularly examined upon this matter in order that harmony might exist between pastor and people respecting the practice. It does not appear to have been abused in this parish. All the good which the practice carried with it seems happily to have been realized and much of the evil which it wrought in other churches was providentially avoided. While the “Half-Way Covenant” was a departure from the primitive methods of the fathers and while its later practice differed from its first uses, it served good purposes in this church and strengthened the parish during crucial days in its history.

At the same time we observe a decline in morals and the spiritual zeal and fervour of the people. This lower tone of life and recurrence to some of the unhappy spiritual conditions prevalent in the home country gave the ministers great sorrow. When Mr. Wakeman in accordance with the custom of our colony preached the election sermon before the General Court at Hartford, May 14, 1683, it was with a deep sense of the perils which threatened the peace of our churches and the proper growth of the colony.

“Sound Repentance the Right Way to escape deserved Ruin” was the chosen theme. The preacher called it “A Solid and awakening Discourse, Exhorting the people of God to comply with his Counsel, by a hearty practical turning from Sin to

himself and his service thereby to prevent their being made desolate by his departing from them." Three texts were used—Ezek. 18-3, Rev. 2-3, and Zach. 1-3.

The christian reader is informed that the "discourse shews the great danger of a People's departing from God by sin; it will cause God to depart from them, as we here find threatened. The way to escape this Judgment is to be instructed—Be thou instructed lest. This word of commination was directed and spoken first at Jerusalem, but reacheth to us now in New England, who stand in like circumstances before the Lord, as Jerusalem then did. A parallel People with them, both in respect of privilege and provocation, Profession and Prevarication. They were highly favored of God, so have we been. They deeply revolted from God, so have we done. . . . We in this land are greatly degenerate. New England Israel was once Holiness unto the Lord. What are we now?"

This sermon which, printed in Boston by Samuel Green in 1685, covers forty-four pages and has fifty-two divisions and sub-divisions, sets clearly and forcibly before us the state of morals in Connecticut society of the second generation. "The Reverend and Pious author," writes the editor of the little book, "having the sense of what he spake upon his own heart, may will also to affect the heart of others." For Mr. Wakeman had become "exceeding tremendously suspicious" that "Christian defections and rampant, colonial sins" would bring down awful punishment upon his people. "New England's name hath been much set by," he remarks; "much more than now New England's credit and repute is brought many pegs lower than sometimes."

Mr. Wakeman had been appointed by the General Court in 1696 to accompany several ministerial brethren to Windsor and advise concerning serious troubles in that parish. A wise conservative counsellor, a man of large affairs and generous impulses, he often served his people and the colony in the adjustment of quar-

rels and difficulties. But we note with peculiar satisfaction that his own parish was kept comparatively free from the heated and acrimonious neighborhood conflicts which frequently marred the peace of various settlements.

The Fairfield townsmen were liberal in their support of the minister, but in 1668 some of them suggested a change of method in raising church funds. Mr. Wakeman did not favor making any part of the preacher's maintenance a matter of voluntary contribution. He therefore appealed to the General Court which shared his view of the case. "Established Religion" signified to his mind the backing of civil government in the work of the church. He was the servant of Connecticut not less than a magistrate or law-maker and as such the state stood in duty bound to support him.

A sermon preached at Fairfield in October 1672 and printed in Cambridge by Marmaduke Johnson in 1673, gives us another view of social needs in the colony. The discourse is entitled, "A Young Man's Legacy to the Rising Generation." It is a commemorative address preached "upon the death and at the desire of John Tappin of Boston." The man of moral stability and spiritual power is the man demanded for service. It is such servants of God who will stem the current of vice, irreligion and iniquity and help to redeem the land from impending doom.


It seems strange that demoralizing changes should have swept over Connecticut before the seventeenth century. The very strenuousness and intensity of early life in the wilderness, however, stimulated the rough, perverse side of human nature. It was war to the knife with beasts, Indians, marauders—it was fierce struggle with stony soil, harsh, cruel winters here and unfriendly patrons across the sea. These things perhaps stirred unwontedly the baser passions and impulses of our fore-fathers and made the fight for nobler social and spiritual conditions much the harder when once the first settlers had lost their fresh enthusiasm and succeeding generations followed along the lower levels of thought and aspiration.

What was to be done for the renewal of pure Christianity and the development of better social conditions?

One answer to this question was the movement to found a college in the colony. It was believed that a lack of convenient facilities for the education of the ministry worked to the injury of Connecticut. The ministers who convened at New Haven in 1700 to discuss higher education and take such means as seemed advisable for the founding of a college numbered ten—Noyes of Stonington, Chauncey of Stratford, Buckingham of Saybrook, Pierson of Killingly, Mather of Windsor, Andrew of Milford, Woodbridge of Hartford, Pierpont of New Haven, Russell of Middletown and Webb of Fairfield. The action taken by these clear visioned men is so familiar to us all that it requires no rehearsal. The original plan was modified and expanded so that an institution was organized whose object was for "instructing youth in the arts and sciences, who may be fitted for public employment both in Church and Civil State." The prime aim naturally was a training of men for the ministry. The founders and trustees were all ministers and the first gifts came from these honored servants of the colony.

But it needed something more than a college to resist the downward trend of life and cope with the social and moral besetments of the times. So the Legislature considered ways and means in connection with the Established Religion and the apparent decline of spiritual vitality. The result will be noted as we proceed in the narrative of parish life. We remark however that this early period in the history of Fairfield shows that the arrangement by which the town at one time acted in the capacity of a civil organization and at another time in the capacity of a religious body did not satisfy any party. It did fairly well so long as everybody in the town was Puritan in faith and practice. But it was found impossible to keep the community screwed up to this high standard. There were numerous lapses—new emigrants came to the plantation bringing lower ideals with them—

the infection of indifference or antagonism to the Puritan spirit spread abroad—a second generation of men grew up whose associations blinded them to the inmost life of their stalwart, devout predecessors. A cry for larger freedom sounded through New England. The first great change in the relation between Church and State in Connecticut was at hand—the inevitable impulse toward the broader view of the question had taken possession of the leaders. It was a distinct advance in the right direction which the colony made, as we shall see, but it did not savor of haste or radicalism. Some of the strongest advocates and most loyal supporters came from the Church in Fairfield. The impress of their words and works has lasted through the later years of progress.



CHAPTER VI.

THE SAYBROOK PLATFORM IS APPROVED

THE Second period in the history of the Prime Ancient Society extends from the date of the Saybrook Platform in 1709 to the year 1818 when the disestablishment of the State Church occurred.

This is the long season—a century and more—when warfare spiritual, ecclesiastical, ethical, political and social raged with violence and Fairfield was one of the chief storm centers. Many a hard fought battle between Old Lights and New Lights, members of the Established Religion and Dissenters, Patriots and Tories, Consociationists and Anti-Consociationists, Congregation-
alists and Church of England people was fought to the finish on this parish soil.

The “ defects of the discipline of the churches of this government ” moved the Legislature, 1708, to call a Synod which convened at Saybrook September 9th. The results of this important convention were laid before the General Court at its October session and approved by the following vote :

“ The Reverend Ministers delegates from the elders and messengers of the churches in this government, met at Saybrooke Sept. 9th, 1708, having presented to this Assembly a Confession of Faith, Heads of Agreement, and regulations in the Administration of Church discipline, as unanimously agreed and consented to by the elders and messengers of all the churches in this government. This Assembly do declare their great approbation of such a happy agreement, and do ordain that all the churches within this government that are or shall be thus united in doctrine, worship and discipline, be, and for the future shall be owned and acknowledged established by law. Provided always

that nothing herein shall be intended and construed to hinder or prevent any society or church that is or shall be allowed by the laws of this government, who soberly differ or dissent from the united churches hereby established, from exercising worship and discipline in their own way, according to their consciences."

The Court then ordered at its next session in May 1709 that the General Association should "revise and prepare for the press" the Platform adopted at Saybrook. This small volume—the first book published in Connecticut—Governor Saltonstall had printed in New London. The edition of 2,000 copies was paid for by the Colony and sent to four prominent individuals in different parts of Connecticut for distribution. Lieut-Governor Gold received at Fairfield 327 copies which he scattered through this portion of the territory.

"At a Consociation or meeting of the Elders and messengers of the County of Fairfield at Stratfield March 16th, 1709," the Saybrook System was accepted. Rev. Joseph Webb, Deacon John Tompson and Mr. Samuel Cobbet represented this church. This body which embraced all the churches of the county, believed that the Saybrook Confession and Discipline was extremely liberal. The Fairfield Consociation voted that it had power "Authoritatively, Judicially and Decisively to determine ecclesiastically affairs brought to their cognizance." This stricter interpretation of the Synod's Platform and Action was the unanimous voice of the delegates. The Church in Fairfield consistently adhered to that interpretation and gave the colony several of its most sturdy and powerful champions. (A more extended narrative of the Stratfield Council and the Fairfield Consociation is given in Chapter VII—a paper read at the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the organization of the Council in Bridgeport.)

The change in system relieved the Government to a considerable extent in respect to interference in ecclesiastical matters, yet paternalism was still manifest. In 1823 "The Court taking

into consideration the representation of the General Association at Hartford on this instant May, respecting the circumstances of the old first parish in Fairfield, by reason of the infirmities that have long time attended the Rev. Mr. Joseph Webb, pastor of that church, he being now disabled and through weakness and infirmity not able to carry on the work of the gospel ministry among his people, to the great grief of the good people in that Society; Upon consideration of which this Court recommends it to said Society, to agree with some other orthodox minister as soon as conveniently they can and call him to the help of Mr. Webb in the work of the ministry."

This kindly interest and oversight did not always avail in such cases. It was hard to find men to fill the delicate office of an assistant in the parish and it was equally hard to satisfy all parties concerned in the choice of a helper.

Mr. Webb had discharged his duties in town and colony with distinguished success, but frail health trammelled his activity in the very prime of his usefulness. It was largely owing to this fact that missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel were eager to press their work in Fairfield.

The fresh adjustment of church and parish in harmony with the plan of Saybrook had worked well in many towns. It imparted a certain vigorous impulse to the Religious Establishment here and for a time there was less complaint of moral decline and spiritual indifference. A stronger, better organization of church forces helped to shape local affairs into a more satisfactory condition. It was no longer town and church—the townsmen exercising a controlling influence in the affairs of the church. The town attended to its own affairs, while the parish composed of tax payers identified to a greater or less extent with the church, elected its moderator, clerk, prudential committee, school committee, collector, tithing man and other necessary officers. Every property holder in the parish was taxed for the support of the Established Religion unless he presented a certifi-

cate to the effect that he worshipped with some other church, in which case his tax was given to the support of the minister designated as his pastor.

The Saybrook system continued in force until 1784 when the revision of the statutes omitted all reference to it and thereby quietly authorized the lapse of its legal authority. A tax for the support of religion however was imposed by the state until the present Constitution was adopted in 1818.

The method of procedure in organizing a new church is clearly illustrated in the case of Norfield—a part of the Fairfield parish. Application was made to the General Court by certain men in 1757 and the request that Norfield be constituted a distinct parish was granted.

“At a meeting of the inhabitants of Norfield in the town and county of Fairfield”—I quote from the records of the parish—“legally warned by a writ given out by Robert Waker a squire justice of the peace for the county of Fairfield, and David Coley and Nathan Morris and David Godfrey of said parish, on the 23rd day of June, legal action was taken, officers elected and committees appointed in accordance with the instructions of the general court. Nathaniel Squier was chosen moderator, Daniel Andrews clerk, David Coley, David Adams and John Lyon parish committee. It was voted to appoint Nathaniel Squier, Nathan Morris, David Buckley and Daniel Andrews, a committee to give Mr. Samuel Sherwood of Fairfield, ‘a call to preach with us upon probation.’”

On July 4th the second parish meeting was held and it was voted that Mr. Samuel Sherwood be invited “to settle with us in the work of the ministry” and that we “give him fifty pounds lawful money a year for the first three years and at the end of three years, sixty pounds a year annually.” The committee was to consult Mr. Sherwood respecting the date of his ordination.

“At a council of the western district of Fairfield county

convened at Norfield at the desire of the committee of said people and notified by the moderator of the last council (moderator of consociation) met on August 16th, 1757," Noah Hobart of Fairfield was chosen moderator. "The committee of said Norfield parish appeared in council and produced a copy of the act of the general assembly constituting them an Ecclesiastical society, also a copy of the vote of the people choosing Mr. Samuel Sherwood to settle among them in the work of the gospel ministry." These papers and Mr. Sherwood's acceptance of the call were examined, then the candidate was questioned as to "his experimental acquaintance with religion, his views in undertaking the work of the ministry, his principles and thoughts and approbation of the Saybrooke Platform and Confession of Faith." His answers being satisfactory, the council voted "unanimously and cheerfully" to proceed (the next day) at 7 a. m. with his ordination.

On the morning of the 17th of August—one hundred and fifty years ago to-day—"a number of persons of the above parish whose names are hereafter mentioned, appeared in council and produced a certificate from neighboring churches of their being members in full communion and in good standing and subscribed to the following covenant: We the subscribers having been admitted to communion with churches professing the doctrines and practicing the discipline agreed upon by the general consociation of the churches of Connecticut at their meeting in Saybrooke 1709, and being inhabitants of the parish of Norfield, do agree to become a particular church on the constitution aforesaid and covenant with each other to walk together in brotherly love and christian approbation of the reverend council convened to ordain a minister in this place and if we may be received and owned as one of the Consociated churches of this district, August 17th, 1757." Twelve men including the candidate for ordination signed this paper. "The council approved of this motion and accordingly admitted and owned them as one of the Conso-

ciated churches of this district. The church then proceeded to invite Mr. Sherwood, one of their members, to take the pastoral charge of them. Mr. Sherwood accepted their invitation. The council unanimously voted the above minute and proceeded to the ordination."

The sermon on the occasion was preached by Rev. Noah Hobart of Fairfield.

CHAPTER VII.

"THE EPISCOPAL SEPARATION."

AMONG the laity there was no more zealous champion of the Established Religion in Connecticut than Lieut-Governor Gold. Inheriting the robust characteristics of his father and profiting by the opportunities presented him, he entered vigorously into the life of his day, giving himself unstintedly to public affairs both in church and state. An ardent advocate of Consociationism, a consistent believer in the Confession and Discipline of the Establishment, a tireless opponent of the Church of England, as represented by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, he brought down upon himself the bitter reproaches of men who organized and sustained the "Episcopal Separation" in Connecticut. Fairfield was certainly the "chief seat of opposition to the Church of England;" and doubtless the presence and activity of Governor Gold, "its eminent persecutor," as Beardsley calls him, had something to do with the intensity of feeling manifest here. But it is for us impartially, dispassionately to take a survey of the situation.

Dissenters in England, abused, ostracised, hunted in some cases like wild beasts, had fled to New England in order that they might worship God as conscience and reason directed. They established towns and churches in the wilderness—following the simple forms suggested by their study of the New Testament and the exigencies of circumstances. After passing through great straights they prospered and their churches multiplied. Plantations were blessed with faithful ministers—school and college entered upon the work of education. The colony assumed a kind of pleasant attractiveness to settlers.

Uninvited there came to these parishes men who remained

loyal to the Church of England. Knowing full well that the Established Religion was Congregational and that all settlers were taxed for its support, they insisted upon moving into these parishes. And when the favorable opportunity presented itself they agitated the organization of a Dissenting Society—an "Episcopal Separation." The appeal for help sent to the Home Country resulted in the formation of a Missionary Society which speedily supplied with missionaries the regions where some movement favorable to the Church of England had been manifest.

Naturally men like Governor Gold and associates whose ancestors had suffered persecution in England did not regard with kindness the attempts of newcomers to bring into the community the organization which had harried the first adventurers out of the mother country. It was believed firmly that the introduction of Episcopacy into New England would result eventually in fresh tyranny like to that which had formerly distressed Pilgrim and Puritan before they crossed the sea.

Let us recal the fact that Church and State were intimately conjoined with few exceptions in all parts of Christendom—that the support of religion by public, common tax was nearly universal—that the form of religion which prevailed in a state was the Establishment supported by this taxation. It therefore seemed to the fathers in Connecticut that a stroke was aimed at the very life of the colony when the "Episcopal Separation" took form and missionaries from the Church of England appeared in these parts. Such fears seem to us not only groundless but absurd—not so however to the people of the Established Religion in this colony. When old prayer-books which had been hidden in oak chests for one or two generations were brought out and new prayer-books supplied by friends of the movement began to circulate in town, waves of excitement passed back and forth over the community like rough, fitful winds playing across the waters of the Sound, lashing the body into violent commotion.

The fear which agitated the minds of men in Mr. Webb's parish had a political source. A Church of England flourishing in Connecticut must inevitably seek the expulsion of a Congregational order and introduce the dominancy of a prelatical clergy. The presence and authority of men so closely identified with a tyrannous home government was believed to signify ultimately loss not only of the religious freedom which the colonists had enjoyed but likewise the loss of their civil independence. It had been a delightful and soul-satisfying liberty which these Puritan settlers and their descendants had exercised in Connecticut. In their minds the Church of England, a vital part of the Home Government, stood for old time slavery and harassment. Do you marvel that the men who thought deeply upon these subjects, whose fathers had been stripped of rights and driven into exile, whose early experiences had been highly seasoned with persecution or the vivid story of it—do you marvel that these earnest men yielded to wide-spread alarm and faced the missionaries of the S. P. G. with such warfare as they were able to command.

When the Rector of Yale College and his little company felt constrained to enter the Church of England the stroke fell with awful force upon the parish of Fairfield. Mr. Webb a founder and trustee of the college, intimately concerned in its prosperity and a leader in the colony, broken in health and crippled in labor, was unable to breast the storm raging in the neighborhood.

Mr. Johnson wrote enthusiastically to the society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts on June 11th, 1724, "the whole town would I believe embrace the Church if they had a good minsiter at Fairfield. I have a vast assembly every time I visit them."

But Mr. Johnson was mistaken. He had not really felt the pulse of the people. A small number of families responded to his missionary activity. The condition of Mr. Webb invested

such effort. The "strong minister" which Mr. Johnson desired came to Fairfield in the person of Mr. Henry Caner, certainly one of the most faithful and eminent missionaries which served in his day and generation, but there was no such desertion of the Established Religion as Mr. Johnson suggested. On the contrary the Established Church in Fairfield entered upon a fresh and splendid campaign—one of the most prosperous periods in its history.

The Reverend Noah Hobart, grand-son of the Reverend Peter Hobart of Hingham, Massachusetts, became pastor of this church, February 7th, 1733. He was a man of large attainments, fine scholarship, keen intellect and tremendous energy, admirably adapted for the work to which he was called, serving this parish forty full years, and contributing most liberally to its growth and influence. The "Episcopal Separation" discovered in him a controversialist whose powers rendered him a conspicuous and splendid leader. No sooner was he settled in the parish than he entered the arena of controversy. His sermons, addresses and papers on "Consociationism," and "Episcopal Separation" are a part of Connecticut Ecclesiastical History. The people of the parish rallied to the sound of his clarion notes while the churches of the Establishment in the colony rejoiced in his powerful and efficient championship.

"It certainly is, in some circumstances, a necessary part of a Minister's Duty, to write upon Controversy and even to contend earnestly for the Faith," says Mr. Hobart in the preface to one of his books. "It has pleased the Lord of the Harvest to assign my particular Station in his Field in the midst of the Episcopal Separation. For though the Progress of it has not been in any Degree equal to the Reports that have been spread abroad; yet I suppose it has prevailed more in the County of Fairfield than in any other part of New England."

Mr. Hobart entitled his first book on the subject "A Serious Address to the Members of the Episcopal Separation in New England, Occasioned by Mr. Wetmore's Vindication."

The author discusses three questions which he answers in the negative—(1) Whether New Englanders ought to conform to the prelatic church—(2) Whether it be prudent for Congregationalists to go over to that communion—(3) Whether it be lawful.

His sharp, incisive language, his varied arguments, his zeal, warmth, passion evoked several rejoinders.

This necessitated another book entitled "A Second Address to the Member of the Episcopal Separation in New England. Occasioned by the few Exceptions made to the former by Dr. Johnson, Mr. Wetmore, Mr. Beach, and Mr. Caner." The first part of the book is distinctly personal—reading which contains not a little spice, revealing interesting conditions in Fairfield and correcting various misstatements on the part of his antagonists.

It had been reported that galleries must be built in Trinity Church so that the worshippers might have room for the throng desiring to worship according to the Church of England way.

"The truth of the case was this," writes Mr. Hobart, "my worthy Predecessor the Rev. Mr. Webb, who had been for some years in a languishing state, died a few months before the date of this letter. Mr. Caner and his People were sanguine enough to expect very considerable accessions to their Church on this occasion. In confidence of this, they began to build Galleries and he wrote this account to the Society. But they were disappointed in their expectations." The old edifice on Mill Plain was large enough for their needs.


When they built the new edifice near the village center, Mr. Hobart quotes Mr. Caner as saying that "the old Church was near a Mile from the Centre of the Town" and "by removing it into the Town, Provision was made for a decent Attendance at All Times." "Agreeable to this," continues Mr. Hobart, "it is credibly reported that when Mr. Caner determined to leave this People, he gave it as a Reason of his Removal, that he had spent twenty years in Preaching to bare Walls."

These extracts indicate the state of feeling which existed at this time. That fear filled the minds of men like Mr. Hobart—fear lest Tyranny might stalk through the land and forge fetters for the people—is manifest in various writings which have been preserved. An end came to Sir Edmund Andros' tyranny and the colonies received back "their invaluable privileges both Civil and Religious," but discussion raged with unabated violence.

Mr. Hobart answers with precision and amplitude the statements and arguments presented by his opponents. Apostolic Succession, Parker's Consecration, Ordination in the Primitive Church, Instalment of Ministers in the early New England Churches and various ramifications of the subject are treated. He refers to the fact that a large proportion of the first ministers in our churches were Episcopally ordained in England and never renounced their ordination, their setting apart to the pastorate in this country being an installation in particular service. "We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England; though we cannot but separate from the Corruptions of it. But we go to practice the positive part of Church Reformation in America," exclaimed Mr. Higginson only three months before his entrance upon work in the Church at Salem.

Mr. Hobart also reverts to the fact that our ministers with few exceptions trace their Presbyterial ordination back to these first Episcopally ordained preachers. Mr. Webb was ordained by Mr. Walker and others, Mr. Walker by Mr. Warham and others, Mr. Warham by his brethren the Bishops in England. Then he refers to the "deplorable state of ecclesiastical discipline in the Church of England" and its effect here in the colonies. He concludes his treatise with caustic and elaborate observations relating to "The Conduct of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" and "The Accounts transmitted to them by Their Missionaries in New England, by which Their Conduct is very much influenced and regulated."

The prominence of Fairfield in the affairs of the colony at this time and the powerful advocacy of the Established Religion on the part of Mr. Hobart gave this church a most worthy name and a widely extended influence. For some years several of its members took a leading part in matters of state. We have referred to Lieut-Governor Gold who likewise served as Judge and Chief Justice. Judge Peter Burr was another important personage who contributed most generously to the upbuilding of life in the community and colony, occupying numerous places of trust, contemporary with Mr. Gold for a period, attaining the office of Chief Justice and discharging with honor and ability the various offices which he filled. A third gentleman whose home was in Fairfield imparted tone and dignity to life in church and state during this period. For many years Mr. Ebenezer Silliman sat as one of the Judges of the Superior Court, a distinguished and helpful servant among the people. His name is one which appears very frequently in the records of church and parish—showing his faithful labors through a long series of years.



CHAPTER VIII

THE SAYBROOK PLATFORM AND THE CONSOCIATION.

Two centuries ago there stood on "Meeting-House Hill" an humble, wooden house of worship erected by the pioneer folk of the settlement called Stratfield. Hardly a decade had passed since the primitive structure was reared for the convenience of the families scattered over this region midway between Fairfield and Stratford.

Two centuries ago the door of this simple, rough-hewn edifice swung open on a certain day at the bidding of the Colonial Legislature. The wisdom and piety of Connecticut had assembled in Saybrook and devised a new ecclesiastical system. The Legislature said that it was very good and recommended that the wisdom and piety of each county assemble by representatives and adopt this system for the common governance and benefit of the Established Religion of Connecticut.

It was the middle of March when the six ministers and the twelve messengers saddled their horses and plodding through a greater or less portion of wilderness wended their slow, difficult way to the Meeting-house on the Hill. Old-fashioned winters then prevailed; and winter generally lingered in the lap of spring. The snows were deep, the ice which bridged creeks and rivers in Fairfield county was breaking up so that dangerous streams had to be forded or swum. Indians still haunted the deep forest and stole down to the shore settlements harassing the pioneers, compelling men to travel with gun and other necessary equipment. We can see these eighteen citizens moving cautiously upon Stratfield, alert, wearied, purposeful—subduing distance, perils, March winds and the uncertainties of adventurous travel. They would start in the morning—the more remote brethren getting an early

start so that the first coming together would be in the afternoon. As they arrive one after another we observe their rugged appearance—men inured to hardship, outdoor activity and the incidental strain and wear of pioneer experience.

The territory embraced by the representatives of the churches was large. Fairfield extended over a portion of what is now Litchfield county and it also included the region along the Connecticut line which at a later date was incorporated into the state of New York. But no ministers or messengers from these distant parts were present on this occasion. Fairfield, the county seat, Danbury which became the half-shire place of county government, Stamford whose church had migrated from Wethersfield, Norwalk and Woodbury, younger settlements than those already named, and Stratfield the convenient place of assembly, each sent the minister. Stratford was represented by two messengers, her pulpit having been vacant since the death of the Rev. Israel Chauncey. Seven churches had twelve messengers present—Norwalk one, Stratfield one and the others two apiece.

There was the Rev. John Davenport of Stamford whom the brethren placed in the chair of the Moderator. Mr. Davenport might be described as a true scion of the old stock. Fame descended to him from the first minister of the New Haven Colony and many of his grandsire's characteristics. This first American Davenport was an English clergyman in the city of London during the Great Plague. His fearlessness, energy and devotion were nobly illustrated by the splendid work which he did on that occasion. And fame is reflected upon him through the noteworthy conduct of his son Abraham, who stood up in the House of Deputies on the dark day when brother legislators feared the crack of doom and exclaimed in response to a suggestion of adjournment :

"Let God do his work. We will see to our's."

"Bring in the candles."

Or words to that effect. A born leader, honors came naturally to him and he bore them with becoming grace. It was fitting that he preside over this first meeting of a body which was to take a conspicuous part in the religious history of Connecticut.

Mr. Davenport is described as "one eminent for learning a bulwark and a barrier of our frontiers." An excellent scholar in Hebrew and Greek—endowed with remarkable memory, alert to the signs of the times, he was particularly suited to the task of presiding over the meeting. A trustee of Yale College and therefore intimate with the leaders of thought and affairs in New England, a member also of the Saybrook Synod, whose action and platform was to be reviewed and explained at this time, he had in hand the various subjects which were to be discussed. His pastorate in Stamford extended over a period of thirty eight years.

The Rev. Charles Chauncey was chosen scribe. He probably furnished the paper which was a rare and expensive commodity. A happy thing it is that the minister of the entertaining Church was elected to this important office, for it is perhaps owing to that fact that the record of the meeting was incorporated in the Records of the First Church in Bridgeport and thus preserved for us to-day.

Mr. Chauncey was another minister with ancestors. His father Israel, had faithfully served the people of Stratford through a long, happy pastorate. He was one of the ministers who discharged the office of physician, combining treatment of soul and body, greatly to the comfort and benefit of his loyal people. His grandfather Charles, (a Trinity man of Cambridge and a professor of Greek) for whom he was named, attained enduring renown as the president of Harvard College.

With such blood running in his veins it was inevitable that he teach and preach with edification. Although comparatively young at the time when this initial meeting of the Consociation was held in Stratfield, he had shaped the church here into good

form and had rendered acceptable public service in the colony.

"Present from ye Chh of Fairfield the Revd Mr. Joseph Webb," says the Record. This agreeable gentleman and shepherd of the Prime Ancient Society came from the neighborhood of Boston. He had been what some of the brethren term "a lively and ingenious youth." His spirit of fun and mischief involved him in trouble while a student at Harvard and resulted in his temporary suspension. But the ebullition of life simply expressed the ardent, vigorous spirit which ruled him throughout his career—a spirit which later became tempered with wisdom, kindness and good will.

Mr. Webb was the wit of the meeting. A happy, facetious style of conversation made him exceedingly popular. We are not to think of these Puritan divines as long-faced, gloomy men, frightening the children by their severe manners and sepulchral speech. Many of them abounded in humor—making their very congregations laugh immoderately at times. The sprightly fun-loving young minister from Fairfield was one of the most hospitable of hosts, a generous, blithe entertainer, remarkably frank and free of speech and withal a most acceptable and eminent preacher. For thirty years he acted as trustee of the young College which he had helped to found.

His faithful labors in Fairfield cover thirty-eight eventful years—one of the transitional epochs in local affairs. A large factor in the life of town and colony, he gave himself with unstinted generosity to the various forward movements of the day.

The Reverend Mr. Seth Shove, another member of the council, was the first pastor of the Danbury Church. He brought to his people the Boston atmosphere. Like Davenport, Chauncey and Webb he graduated at Harvard. The length of his pastorate—thirty-nine years—speaks well for him and his people. The tasks of organization in his parish fell to him by fore-ordination and these tasks appear to have been performed with com-

mendable fidelity. He was known as a great lover of peace—the olive branch fittingly representing his controlling spirit. Need there was—great need—of wise, sympathetic men, whose office might be to pour oil upon troubled waters. The conditions of society both political and ecclesiastical were such that frequent opportunities for peace-making occurred. “It was not so in Mr. Shove’s day, when all things went well,” is a saying still quoted in Danbury—testimony to the noble character of the man. A friend of Judge Sewall speaks in high terms of praise concerning Mr. Shove—an efficient school-master for several years, a man of affairs, a modest, reserved yet capable public servant. He added dignity to the occasion when the Fairfield Consociation was organized.

The Reverend Stephen Buckingham came from Norwalk. His father, the Reverend Thomas Buckingham, was pastor of the Church at Saybrook, one of the founders of Yale College, and one of the moderators of the Synod in 1708 which formed the Saybrook Platform. His brother Thomas had served the second Church of Hartford as minister. The family was of Welsh descent. The Norwalk brother manifested characteristic force and determination. His people dealt generously with him when he settled in their midst as the record of ordination shows. A salary of eighty pounds with fire-wood was allowed him. The town built for him a house 42 feet in length, 22 feet in breadth, two stories high, with double chimneys, a comely porch and a cellar. A home lot of four acres was given him with sixteen acres of swamp and upland, ten acres of upland lying in the woods, sixty acres of other land lying in the woods, and two acres of salt meadow. There was also included in the settlement three hundred pounds right in commonage. Mr. Buckingham began preaching at Norwalk in 1695 but was not ordained until two years later. He continued in the pastorate for twenty nine years when the relation was terminated by reason of parish difficulties.

The sixth minister who sat in the Council was the Reverend Anthony Stoddard. Like several other of the pastors present he came of clerical stock. His father, the Reverend Solomon Stoddard of Northampton transmitted various notable qualities to his son. And not less worthy of remark is the inheritance received from his mother, Mary Downing, the sister of Sir George Downing, who held office under Cromwell and Charles II in England. Mr. Stoddard graduated at Harvard in 1697. He ministered intermittently as a supply in Woodbury from 1700 to 1702. In this latter year he was ordained as pastor of the Woodbury Church where his service continued until death in his eighty-third year, 1760—a pastorate of fifty-eight years preceded by two years as a supply. And he likewise served as physician and lawyer—having prepared himself for these other labors by special study. Physicians were scarce and the law of the colony in that day allowed only two lawyers for Fairfield county. It was therefore a large and onerous task which this minister performed during two generations—a period fraught with important events political, social, educational and ecclesiastical. Mr. Stoddard took active, earnest part in the various affairs of the parish, county and colony. Clerk of Probate for his district for nearly forty years, he drew nearly all the wills of his parishioners. He was also a shrewd, successful farmer, the inventory of his estate at death amounting to nine hundred pounds, exclusive of books and wearing apparel.

An all-around man, broad minded, incessantly useful, brave, generous and benign, his presence was a distinct contribution to the weight and influence of the Stratfield convention.

This was a notable company of ministers—the pick of the colony. Learning, good family, ample means, leadership in public affairs, wisdom and influence characterized the men. It was truly a representative selection, distinguished for ability, patriotism and worth.

The twelve laymen who accompanied the ministers stood

high in general esteem. Deacon John Tompson and Mr. Samuel Cobbett of Fairfield, Joseph Curtiss Esq., and Mr. Samuel Sherman of Stratford, Lieut. James Bennett of Stratfield, Deacon Samuel Hoyt and Mr. Joseph Bishop of Stamford, Lieut. James Beebee and Mr. James Benedict of Danbury, Deacon Zerubbabel Hoit of Norwalk, Deacon John Sherman and Deacon Matthew Mitchell of Woodbury, being names familiar these days in various fruitful, distinguished lines of descent—the years since this first meeting of Consociation being filled with the honorable achievements of numerous sons who have served church and state.

The churches which these ministers and messengers represented were sturdy exponents of healthy conditions in pioneer life noteworthy strongholds of orthodoxy and conservatism. They had shared largely in the shaping of community and colony. Although the changes made since the first emigrants settled Fairfield county had registered themselves in a relaxed piety yet the churches contained a nucleus of earnest, devout men who constituted a stalwart body of believers.

The church first named in the record of this meeting was the Church at Fairfield. It had attained leadership in this region. The fact that Fairfield was the county seat perhaps gave the first parish a sort of precedence. Several of the prominent men in the colony made their home in Fairfield. Beardsley in his History of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut speaks of Fairfield as "the chief seat of opposition to the Church of England and honored with the residence of Lieut-Governor Gold, eminent persecutor."

The second church named in the Record was the Prime Ancient of Stratford. The Rev. Timothy Cutler entered upon the pastorate of this church in the year of the Consociation's organization. He was not present at the Council. Dr. Cutler became Rector of Yale College at a later date and later still resigned his office and entered the ministry of the Church of England. Strat-

ford parish had already been disturbed by threatened defections to the Church of England and when Mr. Muirson, the missionary ordained by the Bishop of London in 1705, came to Rye he soon visited Stratford and in 1707 a parish with wardens and vestrymen was organized. The intensity of feeling engendered by this action resulted in the freshening of that hope for better conditions which expressed itself in loyalty to the Saybrook Platform and the Fairfield Consociation. But the atmosphere of Stratford appeared to have been even more controversial than that of Fairfield for the parish had already divided on the question of the Half-Way Covenant. It was a strong church and a notable parish—this Stratford company of men and women—but there were many contrary winds of doctrine blowing across the country and various riotous storms gathered and broke in the neighborhood.

The third church in the order of the register is that of Stratfield. This was the youngest church represented. When it was organized in 1695 two-thirds of its families came from Fairfield and one-third from Stratford. The name you observe is a courteous acknowledgment of kindly debt to these two mother parishes. The people were closely identified with the people of Fairfield and Stratford so that a family feeling prevailed in a large degree and the three churches were thoroughly sympathetic in their conservatism and hopefulness. The young church at Stratfield had made good advance at this period and stood by no means as an inferior among the churches in respect to zeal, ability and aggressiveness.

The fourth church named on the book is that of Stamford. The men who figured prominently in its affairs were typical Puritan adventurers with a larger degree of spirit and progress perhaps than characterized some of the other settlements. There was considerable unrest among members of the parish. It was a task which might well try the nerve and patience of a large man, the leadership of such a people. But Mr. Davenport was equal to it. His election as moderator of the Council was quite a

much an honor for the Stamford Church as for the minister. His advice and co-operation were eagerly sought on every side. The church became one of the strong churches of the colony under his inspiration.

Stamford was settled two years later than Fairfield and Stratford. The church of that town however was first in seniority among its sisters in the county.

Our beloved brother Mr. Scovill who has passed to his reward after a long and fruitful ministry states the case clearly in his historical discourse preached in the year 1886. The Church at Wethersfield organized by permission of the Massachusetts "Corte," probably in 1636, having seven voting members, divided into two bodies in 1640. The minister and three laymen with other people left Wethersfield in the spring of 1641 and migrated to the Rippowams (now Stamford.) It is said that they carried the Church Records with them, leaving the remaining three laymen to organize a new church in Wethersfield. This claim to seniority is respectfully denied by other historians, but I state it as a mark of respect for the long time pastor of Stamford Church.

The fifth church to have its name inscribed in the membership of the Council was the Prime Ancient Society of Danbury. The exact date of this church's organization is unknown, but it was probably about the year 1696 when Mr. Shove became its first pastor. The entire neighborhood manifested great interest in the building of the first Meeting-House—a frame structure forty feet in length by thirty feet in breadth. Mr. Robbins, the historian, says "It is remarkable that after the frame was raised every person that belonged to the town was present and sat on the sills at once." The parish was so fortunate as to enjoy the services of a regular physician, born and educated in England, a rare and precious privilege, which turned to the advantage of the minister inasmuch as he generally was compelled to play the part of healer when better services could not be commanded.

The church grew vigorously during these early years so that when minister and messengers attended the Stratfield Council it would have been impossible for the people of the parish to have crowded upon the sills of the Meeting-House. Danbury was a frontier settlement. But peace prevailed and the church was esteemed a substantial accession to the sisterhood of churches.

Norwalk stands next in the register. This church was notable for its zeal and energy. Organized probably in the year 1652 it had become one of the leading and important centers of ecclesiastical and religious activity at the time of the Stratfield Council. The parish had built its second house of worship, had enlarged this structure, had built a long gallery where men and women sat apart in dignified reserve, had purchased and hung a bell which served the public, had attended strictly to such proprieties as covering the minister's desk with expensive cloth, seating the meeting according to "age, quality, and the estates of persons in the public list," the seat under the pulpit being "sequestered for such as are orderly constituted or officiate in the place or office of a Deacon or Deacons." Their prosperity and kindness had been manifested by their generous regard for Mr. Hanford the first minister who had been requested "to proceed, though grown old in the work of the ministry, until the Lord shall dispose of him." It is interesting to note the fact that when the Lord did dispose of Mr. Hanford, the good man left one of the largest if not the largest estate in Norwalk. This influential parish was well represented in the Council.

The last church named has passed beyond the bounds of the Fairfield Consociations. The First Church of Woodbury, organized as the second Church of Stratford, owes its separate existence to heated discussions upon the "Half-Way Covenant" which it championed with all zeal and faithfulness. When the division between mother church and daughter church occurred the same minister served both parties of the divided parish. But colonization was the final issue and a goodly portion of the

Stratford brethren moved back into the beautiful hill country where they builded pleasant homes and established a new, robust parish. At the time of the Stratfield Council, the Woodbury Church was a quiet, prosperous body of excellent, devout people who lived on the edge of the wilderness and steadily advanced in substantial worth and conservative influence.

The Stratfield Council made an athletic company. Ministers as well as messengers were conversant with out-door labor, used to daily toil, skilled in the management of horses and fire-arms, practiced in the arts of war and peace. Pioneer life conduced to athleticism in mind as well as body. To argue politics and theology was the delight of days and nights. Details of farming, military tactics, ecclesiastical order, town affairs and social relations furnished an inexhaustible fund of conversation. These public meetings therefore were important functions, determinative of numerous issues.

It is not difficult for us to visualize the company. I have read the wills of several men who figured in this assembly so that I know what sort of clothes they wore and how these stalwart sons of the Puritans appeared. They came through snow and ice on horseback. Perhaps caps rather than hats covered their bewigged heads. Big, voluminous cloaks wrapped their sturdy forms. Underneath was the conventional black broad-cloth coat. (Mr. Webb's best coat was appraised at six pounds sterling.) High stocks supported neck and chin, around which hung a tippet to ward off riotous winds. Calamink vest, plush breeches with silver knee buckles, heavy knit woolen stockings, big shoes fastened with silver buckles, thick woolen mittens for the hands—these were characteristic articles worn at Stratfield.

As there was no stove in the little meeting-house, doubtless some of the good people provided foot-stoves for such brethren as required artificial heat. But they were a hardy folk those days and unflinchingly braved cold, inclemency or discomfort.

They assembled in the afternoon. These thoughtful,

observant men, rugged and masterful in their personality, chosen leaders of the people, reared in an atmosphere of theological and ecclesiastical controversy, realizing that it was given them to shape the course and destiny of the churches in western Connecticut—these men entered upon their tasks with profound sense of their responsibility. The prayer for guidance was a most solemn, heartfelt appeal. The moderator, Rev. John Davenport, being inducted into his office, the scribe, Rev. Charles Chauncey, with quill in hand and ink-horn by his side, placed his precious sheets of paper on the little table. The Saybrook Platform with the action and request of the Colonial Legislature was then presented to the dignified, attentive body of ministers and messengers.

We do not know how late the hour to which the discussion was prolonged. We simply know that there was a recess for the night and that in the morning at eight o'clock, a draught of conclusions was presented and final agreement reached.

"The Consociation being met, according to adjournment, after prayer, it was agreed :—

"Imps. That all the Chhs in ye County of Fairfield be one Consociation."

"2. That ye Pastors met in our Consociation have power with ye Consent of the Messengers of our Chhs chosen and attending, authoritatively, Judicially and Decisively to determine ecclesiastically affairs brot to their Cognizance, according to the the Word of God and that our Pastors with the concurrence and consent of the Messengers of our Chhs to be chosen and that shall attend upon all future occasions, have like authoritative, Judicial and Decisive power of Determination of affairs ecclesiasticall and that in further and fuller meetings of two Consociations together compliant with ye conclusions of ye sd Council of Saybrook, there is the like Authoritative, Judiciall and Decisive power of Determination of Ecclesiastical affairs according to ye Word of God."


Two other articles were adopted and then "the Council adjourned till half an hour past two o'clock in ye afternoon."

Six other articles were adopted at the afternoon session and the ten "Acts and Conclusions" were unanimously voted.

The whole trend of the meeting was conservative. The members of the council were high churchmen in Congregationalism. The Consociation was given a judicial character. This strict elucidation of the principles involved in the Saybrook Platform savored of Presbyterianism. The Fairfield Interpretation was quite at variance with that given by some of the sister bodies in the colony. But the mode of church life and the method of ecclesiastical procedure instituted on this occasion in Stratfield prevailed to a greater or less degree in this county until the middle of the last century or later. A standing council for the ordination, installation, discipline or dismissal of ministers—for the watchcare over churches and the settlement of their difficulties—for general religious purposes in the region covered by its territory—it has exercised large influence over the successive generations which have submitted to its leadership. A strong and eminent succession of men have been loyal to its best and noblest traditions—wielding such power and extending such influence as they possessed with a loyalty to truth and a zeal for service most praiseworthy and fruitful.

We are pleased to emphasize an interesting and curious result observable to-day in the development of our American Congregationalism. While the strict, distinctive features of Connecticut Consociationism have gradually been eliminated from the ecclesiastical bodies in this state, the great, prime essential principles for which this body stood through many generations are gradually becoming incorporated into the latest forms and methods of our denominational life. The name will soon disappear from our Year Book. The word Consociation will become obsolete—a kind of historic landmark. But the spirit of wise, strong organization—closer fellowship in service—

kindly concern and fraternal helpfulness among the churches—standing councils, general superintendency, united front and orderly advance, will prevail—the precious inheritance and inspiration from the Saybrook Platform and Connecticut Consociationism.



CHAPTER IX.

DAYS OF CONTROVERSY AND DISQUIET.

THIS Church has been consistently loyal to the system of government known as Consociationism since its institution in 1709. And this form of church government and association had one of its most learned and earnest supporters in Mr. Hobart. He was what might properly be termed a "High Church" Congregationalist. His little book on "The Principles of Congregationalism" set forth with the knowledge and acumen of the finished scholar the theory which generally prevailed in the churches of the Established Religion.

But it did not please all parties. Mr. Roger Wolcott of Windsor addressed Mr. Hobart in a long and carefully prepared answer to his statement of Congregational Principles. Its interesting title is "The New English Congregational Churches are and always have been, Consociated Churches; and their liberties greater and better founded, in their Platform of Church Discipline agreed to at Cambridge, 1648, than what is contained in the Agreement at Saybrook, 1708." Mr. Wolcott is severe in his strictures upon the new system and takes Mr. Hobart to task for his advocacy of that which seems to him quite at variance with the teachings of Hooker, and his followers.

Later Mr. Hobart prepared a booklet which he called "An Attempt to illustrate and confirm The Ecclesiastical Constitution of the Consociated Churches, In the Colony of Connecticut. Occasioned by a late "Explanation of the Saybrook Platform." He vindicated his own position in this concise piece of writing and answered certain persons, some of them known and some of them unknown, who had seen fit to attack the new system and mis-interpret its plain instruction.

In his argument Mr. Hobart sustains the following propositions: (1) "That the word Church, in the Language of the New Testament, sometimes means a particular Church . . . and at other times a larger Society, consisting of a number of such particular Churches . . . (2) That ecclesiastical Authority . . . is committed to the Church in these Senses, yet so that particular Churches are, in the Exercise of this Power subordinate to Consociated Churches . . . That the Saybrook Agreement was framed upon this model . . . (4) I shall endeavor to answer the Objections taken from a supposed Inconsistency between this Scheme and the Rights of particular Churches, Liberty of Conscience and the Prerogative of Christ, as Lord of Conscience." In conclusion Mr. Hobart reminds the reader that "the great difficulty in civil and ecclesiastical Polity, is to fix the Balance between Authority and Liberty." But it was his opinion that the Saybrook Articles succeeded in striking the fair medium.

Nevertheless a marked divergence of opinion was to be noticed among the members of the various Congregational churches, respecting the authority of the state over congregations, the rights of individual churches and the proper methods of conducting worship, cases of discipline and kindred matters.

The great awakening wrought various changes in the spirit and activities of the Connecticut churches. Men were divided into approving and disapproving parties. The friends and disciples of the revivalists became enthusiastic over the bright prospects of religion. It seemed to them that the day so long desired had come—the day of renewed and exalted Christian experience—the day of larger freedom and nobler power in the spiritual life.

But the very reaction against the deadness and worldliness of professing christians swung the pendulum to the opposite extreme. Fanaticism began to show itself in many places. Groans, contortions, faintings, wild actions, hysteria in various

forms became accompaniments of the meetings held in numerous churches. The people who favored the new way—who believed in the emotional expression of faith—who shared the fervor and ecstasy of these notable hours in the presence of Whitfield, Davenport, Tennant and their co-laborers were nick-named “New Lights.” The brethren who clung to the old ways, and did not look favorably upon these sensational methods—the conservative critical members of the Established Church were called “Old Lights.”

The contest waged between these parties was violent and distressing, dividing families and churches, bringing darkness and sorrow into many communities, at the same time that the fresh type of piety filled many hearts with a delightful and ennobling experience. A certain healthy impulse came to the majority of our churches as the result of the startling innovations and the deep bestirring of common religious life. But throughout the movement there were many ministers and churches constrained to discountenance the work. They used various means to stem the current of emotionalism and sought faithfully to save the people from the anticipated shipwreck of faith.

Mr. Hobart expressed his mind on the subject in a letter to his flock. At the time of writing he was ill.

“Dear Brethren”—he writes—“Since it has pleased God to appoint me a watchman in this place, it is my duty in sight of danger to give warning and since I am under confinement, I am obliged to take this way of doing it. It is probable that we may in a short time have Mr. Davenport among us. He will, I expect, preach here as he has done in other places. For my part I should rejoice to see a more serious and deep concern about the salvation of your souls than I have ever observed among you. But I do not think his preaching will be a means of promoting religion among us. Mr. Davenport’s manner of preaching and acting appear to me extremely different from the example of Christ and his apostles, and to have a tendency to destroy rather

than promote religion. I don't found my judgment on uncertain reports, but was myself a witness to his conduct at New Haven the last fall. You have all I suppose, heard that divisions and contentions have been the unhappy effects of his preaching in many places. As I cannot therefore, countenance or encourage his preaching here, I must advise you not to attend upon him if he comes. I would particularly caution you against attending unseasonable night meetings to the preventing the worship of God in your families and in your closets. But then on the other hand, I would earnestly advise you to beware of engaging in disputes and controversies among yourselves, knowing that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. I shall think you more in God's way and more likely to obtain His blessing when you peaceably and diligently follow the business of your particular calling than when running after and disputing about Mr. Davenport. I conclude with earnest prayers that God will appear either to hinder his coming or prevent such consequences attending it among us as have in many other places; and if after all you shall attend his preaching, and the consequences of it shall prove destructive to the peace of this place and the interests of religion among us, it will be some satisfaction to me, to remember that I gave you warning of the danger and endeavored to prevent it."

The church was back of Mr. Hobart in this desire to cultivate religious life according to the accepted ways of the fathers. Not that a soulless conservatism prevailed. Mr. Hobart was scholar and preacher alive to the conditions and demands of his day. The church had done and was doing an aggressive and laudable work during his ministry—proving itself a very stronghold of faith according to the standards of the Established Religion. But the course pursued by Mr. Davenport and other itinerant preachers was doing much to demoralize the colony and discredit the faith.

The Legislature became so aroused to the necessities of the

case that the members passed a law in May 1742, to the effect that ministers should not preach outside their own parishes except on invitation of the properly constituted authority. Mr. Noyes of New Haven refused his pulpit both to Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Davenport, as did many staunch, worthy men.

For such a course and because these men and their brethren disapproved of the "New Light" methods, the itinerant evangelists said many severe things concerning the pastors of the churches. "Their Light has become Darkness, Darkness that may be felt," was the current speech of Whitefield.

When the revivalists called these learned and faithful preachers "blind and dead men," "men whom the devil drives into the ministry," "unconverted men," it was evident that their heat and zeal had driven them beyond the bounds of truth and charity. So strong a feeling of natural resentment prevailed in this parish that Mr. Whitfield was not given the opportunity to conduct a service among our people. He and his associates had offended the sense of right and justice. Not that he failed to preach with wonderful power the gospel of Christ, but that in his unkind judgment and censorious speeches he reflected upon his own consistency and merit, causing many sober, discreet, spiritual followers of the Master to see in him an eloquent but untrustworthy leader.

During this period when Mr. Caner, the strongest worker among the ministers of the Episcopal Separation in the colony, was doing his best work at Fairfield and the divisive agitation between "Old Lights" and "New Lights" waged fiercely in the parish, Mr. Hobart labored to such purpose and the church prospered in such measure that a new meeting-house became a necessity—the third in the history of the parish—one more commodious and better in every way—a house in keeping with the strength and progress of the church.

The charge that Fairfield stood ready to adopt the Prayer Book and pass bodily into the Church of England, was fully

answered by the work achieved through the ministry of Mr. Hobart. He baptised more than nine hundred people during his pastorate—their names methodically recorded in the Church Register—witness to the efficiency of his pastoral oversight. Both pastor and people contributed the weight of their influence to the Established Religion—their loyalty tested by numerous conflicts quite varied in character. “The way to meet and vanquish the evils of the times,” remarked Mr. Hobart, “is not that of destroying our Constitution by explaining it in a sense contrary to the very design, and the most strong and determined expression of it; but that of defending it by Reason and Scripture, and of acting in conformity to it with steadiness and yet with Prudence, Gentleness and Meekness.”

CHAPTER X.

RELIGION AND POLITICS.

THE fierceness of strife reached its culmination during the period of the American Revolution. For good reasons the Church of England people in Fairfield, and in neighboring towns, were generally identified with the Tory element. As the great struggle for liberty approached, the old lines of division assumed a fresh phase of distinctness. There were times when members of the Established Religion, in rare cases, manifested sympathy with the English Parliament and in its unjust and arbitrary purposes. It is possible that the following letter to Mr. Hobart, written by an esteemed and influential member of his church might be construed that way. Judge Silliman wrote as follows : " Fairfield 30 Nov. 1763.

Since my return home I am informed that you have notified the communicants that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to be administered next Sabbath.

You I suppose are not altogether unacquainted with the Late publick conduct of Job Bartram one of the communicants of the church which not only is offensive to me but to many others of the church—viz : in calling upon God to damn all that had any hand in Making the Act of Parliament called a Stamp Act ; and in Libelling in the most ignominious manner, some in most elevated Stations in Civil Authority ; which appears to me to be plain breeches of the third and fifth commands in ye Moral Law and inconsistent with the Christian Character, the consideration whereof I commend to you and the brethren of ye Church in ye First Society in Fairfield. I am with much Consideration
Yr affectionate Brother

E. Silliman "

I do not discover that the patriotic and rash speaking brother, Mr. Job Bartram, was disciplined by the church. I suspect that his many sympathetic friends winked at this lapse from virtue and approved the spirit if not the form of his protest against Parliamentary tyranny.

The Stamp Act kindled the flames of hostility in this parish and worked to the further estrangement between the Church of England people and the members of the First Church of Christ.

Mr. Lamson the rector of Trinity wrote to the Home Land: "In a time of anarchy and disloyalty in this country, the professors of the Church of England have in general throughout the Province of New England distinguished themselves by a peaceable submission and quiet deportment. The Missionaries have exerted themselves upon the occasion in exhorting their own congregations and others to peace, and a due submission to authority; by which means we have been exposed to the calumny and insult of the enemies of the Church and State. Some of us have been threatened with having our houses pulled down over our heads, though as yet they have kept themselves, in this part of the country, from acts of open violence."

The tenor of this communication indicates the attitude of the "Episcopal Separation" through the struggle which followed. The dispassionate reader sees that these men acted in good conscience. They believed that the Church of England, established by law in the Mother Country, was destined to extend its authority and service over the colonies. Any resistance to England imperilled church extension. Independence, which headstrong agitators suggested, signified a possible repudiation of the Church of England or at the least a disheartening set-back to its progress in New England. As these missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel were "part and parcel" of the Ecclesiastical Establishment in the Home Country, they necessarily labored with all zeal and faithfulness in upholding the English government.

A change in the ministry of the Established Religion in Fairfield occurred at this time. Mr. Hobart passed away full of years and honors. His important work had strengthened markedly the church and the churches of the "Standing Order." A man of equal parts, another sagacious, consecrated leader must be found.

It was learned that a son of Dr. Andrew Eliot, the famous pastor of the North Church, Boston, stood high in the esteem and appreciation of the Harvard brethren. This Andrew Eliot, Jr., was an instructor at Harvard, a man who had already attained considerable reputation, and his mind turned toward a settled pastorate. Invited to visit among our people, he won their hearts and a meeting of the parish was appointed. Mr. Eliot was an ardent patriot. The heart of a loyal Bostonian flamed with passion during these days.

It was of course the desire of our people to extend a unanimous call to Mr. Eliot, but there were individuals in the parish who did not relish the frank, strong speech of this lover of liberty. A strenuous opposition developed so that the meeting adjourned for a week.

When the parish convened on the second occasion Mr. Bibbins arose and remarked that he had recently had a dream which he would like to relate. "I dreamt that I was carried away and suddenly found myself in Satan's dominion. There seemed to be much confusion in the place. Soon Satan rapped for order and said :

'Fellow devils, to-morrow the men of Fairfield are going to make another effort to elect that young Eliot their minister. I hate him. He never misses a chance to give us hard knocks. What shall we do?'

'Send some one to stir up a fight,' cried one of the bad spirits.

'Yes, that is a bright idea,' replied Satan, and he started two of them for Fairfield. Then suddenly he shouted to them

'Come back, come back.' As they drew near he exclaimed, 'You needn't go. I recollect now that Mr. Blank' (the leader of the opposition to Mr. Eliot) 'is on hand. He can do more to get them fighting than a dozen like you.' "

When Mr. Bibbins sat down this leader of the opposition and hater of Mr. Eliot, sprang to his feet, angrily seized his hat, and went stamping down the aisle muttering bitter things about the speaker. The vote was put and Mr. Eliot received an unanimous election.

If the opposition was based on his plain speech and warm devotion to the cause of the colonies, there resulted simply an intensification of his championship. The fervor and enthusiasm of his addresses upon Liberty, Independence and Patriotism served to fan into white heat the responsive parishioners. And it was congenial company in which the scholarly Boston gentleman found himself.

The militia in this part of the colony were put in charge of Col. Silliman, (later General Silliman) one of the most active and influential members of the church,

Gen. Silliman served for many years in the office of deacon. The night in which he was taken prisoner—May 1st, 1779—preceded a Lord's Day chosen for the administration of the sacrament. The beautiful, antique silver cups and tankards, cared for by Mr. Silliman, had been brightened in preparation for the service. When the rude enemy surrounding his house, stove in doors and windows that they might make swift and easy ingress, the church silver was standing uncovered in a corner of his bed-room. The good wife hastily flung over it some of the loose garments in the room so that when the British entered the chamber the coveted silver remained undetected, although the house submitted to a thorough ransacking and such valuables as the soldiers found, were taken with them.

Gen. Silliman was a lawyer of eminent ability—a gentleman,

of noble christian character, an ardent and self-sacrificing patriot, a person of distinction and wide influence.

Another important man in church and state was Hon. Thaddeus Burr, High Sheriff, Deputy, member of the war committee, member of the Governor's Council and servant in various other capacities. A gentleman of the old school, genial, refined, cultivated—affluent in circumstances and intimate with the various leaders of his day, the society of his home was sought by men and women far and wide. He contributed in most generous way to the advance of all church interests and the prosperity of town and colony, Mr. Burr numbered among his friends the leading patriots, scholars, statesmen and ministers of his generation. The artist Copley, the poets Humphrey, Barlow, Dwight, the Adamses, the Quincys, the Hancocks, Washington, Lafayette, Franklin, Trumbull and the large company of fellow workmen, all enjoyed the hospitality of the Burr homestead and enriched the life of Fairfield with their presence.

Another stalwart helper in the church and the state was Mr. Jonathan Sturges, secretary of the Sons of Liberty for Connecticut, member of various town committees, Deputy, member of Congress, Judge of the Superior Court and active laborer in several other public offices. Judge Sturges was associated with Col. Silliman, Andrew Rowland, Job Bartram and Thaddeus Burr in representing the town at a county Congress which considered the subject of Independence and War. Mr. Sturges stood upon the porch of Thaddeus Burr's house with Mr. Burr and Mr. Silliman when a sealed packet was brought to them by a Boston messenger announcing the fight at Lexington.

Col. Abraham Gould bore his honorable part in the activities of the day, giving life itself in behalf of his native land. And there were the Smedleys, the Rowlands, the Squiers, the Dimons, and a goodly company of people in addition to those already named, who shared richly in the history of those exciting, strenuous days.

These people were members of Mr. Eliot's flock—their names appear frequently in the records—their labors in respect to parish affairs were not less noteworthy than in respect to the affairs of state. Judge Silliman, Col. Silliman, Hon. Thaddeus Burr, Hon. Jonathan Sturges, Doctor John Allen, Deacon Nathan Bulkley, Captain Wheeler, Captain Abraham Gould, etc., were the committee to "take care and provide some suitable person to supply the Pulpit" when Mr. Eliot was called to the church. Judge Silliman seemed to be the favorite moderator for the meetings of the parish, through a long period of years. Patriotic Capt. Job Bartram appears as the trusted treasurer. Captain Abel was frequently asked to inspect the school bonds. Ezra Jennings succeeded Ephraim Jennings as collector. Andrew Wakeman, Eben Burr, David Allen and Daniel Osborn acted as committee "to take care of and manage the prudential affairs" of the parish.

In the roster of patriots these and a large company of comrades shine. It was a happy circumstance in the life of Mr. Eliot that he came to a people so broad in culture, so true in life and so loyal to the interests of the colony. Pastor and people worked together in hearty sympathy and fellowship until death parted them.

The church life at this period seemed largely to merge in devotion to the cause of Independence. Ministers, deacons and congregations of the Established Religion gave an intensely patriotic trend to their religious life. Sermons on diverse phases of taxation, government, resistance to constituted authority, rights of man and the freedom of the colonies rang throughout the land. Men preached politics on the Lord's Day and lecture day. They talked politics in the home, on the street, at parish meetings, under the wayside elms.

As an inevitable consequence the cleavage between people of the Established Religion and the people of the Church of England became more and more distinct. Feeling ran high in the

town. The loyalists were members of the missions supported by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. So emphatic was this political turn given to religion in the community that children took it for granted that a patriot was a Congregationalist while members of Trinity Church must necessarily be loyalists. This explains to a degree the bitterness of strife which manifested itself between the two religious organizations at this time.

It is true that members of Trinity Church had been imprisoned for non-payment of taxes in Mr. Webb's day and later. "I have just come from Fairfield," writes Johnson in 1727, "where I have been to visit a considerable number of my people in prison for their rates to the dissenting minister, to comfort and encourage them under their sufferings." By "dissenting ministers" in this case he means of course men of the Established Religion. Mr. Johnson was himself, however, the dissenter in Connecticut.

It is also true that many annoyances were visited upon the people who chose to worship according to the way of the Prayer Book. Public services had various unhappy interruptions. Children became petty tormentors to their elders. Friction existed between families and individuals. But these earlier phases of conflict, like the later ones, were largely political.

It remained for the period of the American Revolution however to illustrate in the greatest force and intensity this antagonism between the two religious bodies; and the conflict reduced itself practically to political issues. Patriots and Congregationalists were identified as one and the same; so were loyalists and members of the "Episcopal Separation." The success of the British—according to common belief—signified the overthrow of the Established Religion and the introduction of Bishops and the rule of a Hierarchy as well as the suppression of democracy and the strong grip of the mother country upon a defeated and humbled colony. So Mr. Sayre the rector of Trinity Church was forbidden—as were other ministers of the Church of England in

Connecticut—to pray for the King. This omission signified a mutilation of the ordered form of Worship and disloyalty to his Majesty the Head of the Church.

Writing on Nov. 8th, 1770—some four months after the burning of Fairfield—Mr. Sayre explained to the Society in London the course which he had been pursuing in his parish. “We did not use any part of the Liturgy lately,” he says, “for I could not make it agreeable, either to my inclination or my conscience, to mutilate it, especially in so material a point as that is wherein our duties as subjects are recognized. We met at the usual hours every Sunday, read parts of the Old and New Testaments and some Psalms. All these were selected in such a manner as to convey such instructions and sentiments as were suited to our situation . . . On Sunday mornings I read the Homilies in their course, and, on the afternoons I expounded either parts of the Catechism or some such passages of Holy Scripture as seemed adapted to our case in particular or to the public calamities in general.”

The feeling ran high against Mr. Sayre and his people. It was believed that they were a menace to the cause of Liberty—that they secretly aided the enemy—that one or another member of the flock played into the hands of the British. Mr. Sayre was at one time sent as an exile back into the country. When permitted to return he was put upon limits. The tradition is that feeling ran so high on one occasion that he would have been subjected to rough personal treatment and his house stripped bare except that a fortunate circumstance diverted the angry crowd of men and made them stay their hands.

When we recal what issues were at stake on both sides—how the success of the British must result in the punishment of rebels to the King and a possible annihilation of the Established Religion here and prove a fatal blow to American liberties—how the success of the Americans must result in the banishment of many loyalists or their forfeiture to Connecticut of

estate or life, how it must be a serious set-back to the progress of the Church of England in America—when we recall these things is it surprising that the clash of individuals, interests and churches brought to the surface of society much which we deplore?

Established Religion represented the interests of Connecticut. It was opposed to the craft of kings and the tyranny of Parliaments. It stood for the democracy which had been characteristic of the colony. It identified itself with American Independence. So far as I can interpret the situation, it was not a fear on the part of our ministers that they might lose their parishes and be thrust helpless upon the world. These men were able to support themselves. They had farms—they taught school—they inherited a fair measure of ingenuity and large measure of self-reliance. What these men chiefly feared was English aggression in both church and state—the loss of that which the fathers had gained through exile, impoverishment and rigid sacrifice. They feared the fresh riveting of chains in bondage civil and ecclesiastical; so they fought to the finish the mighty struggle which engaged them and in that close, tragic conflict they believed that the Church was involved equally with the State.

CHAPTER XI.

INFLUENCES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

THE burning of Fairfield by the British on July 7th and 8th 1779, was a turning point in the history of the town. The county capital was reduced to heaps of smoking ruins. Desolation and sorrow prevailed on every side. "In the morning," writes Mr. Eliot, "the meeting-house, together with the Church of England building, the Court House, Prison and almost all the principal buildings in the Society were laid in ashes. Our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire and all our pleasant places are laid waste.

The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.

Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.

Alleluia!

The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Amen."

It was an invincible spirit of heroism which manifested itself under these tragic circumstances. A goodly proportion of the men belonging to the town were away from home, engaged in the defence of native land. The havoc of fire and assault crippled the community to such an extent that it took years to recover. Poverty forced itself upon many a household.

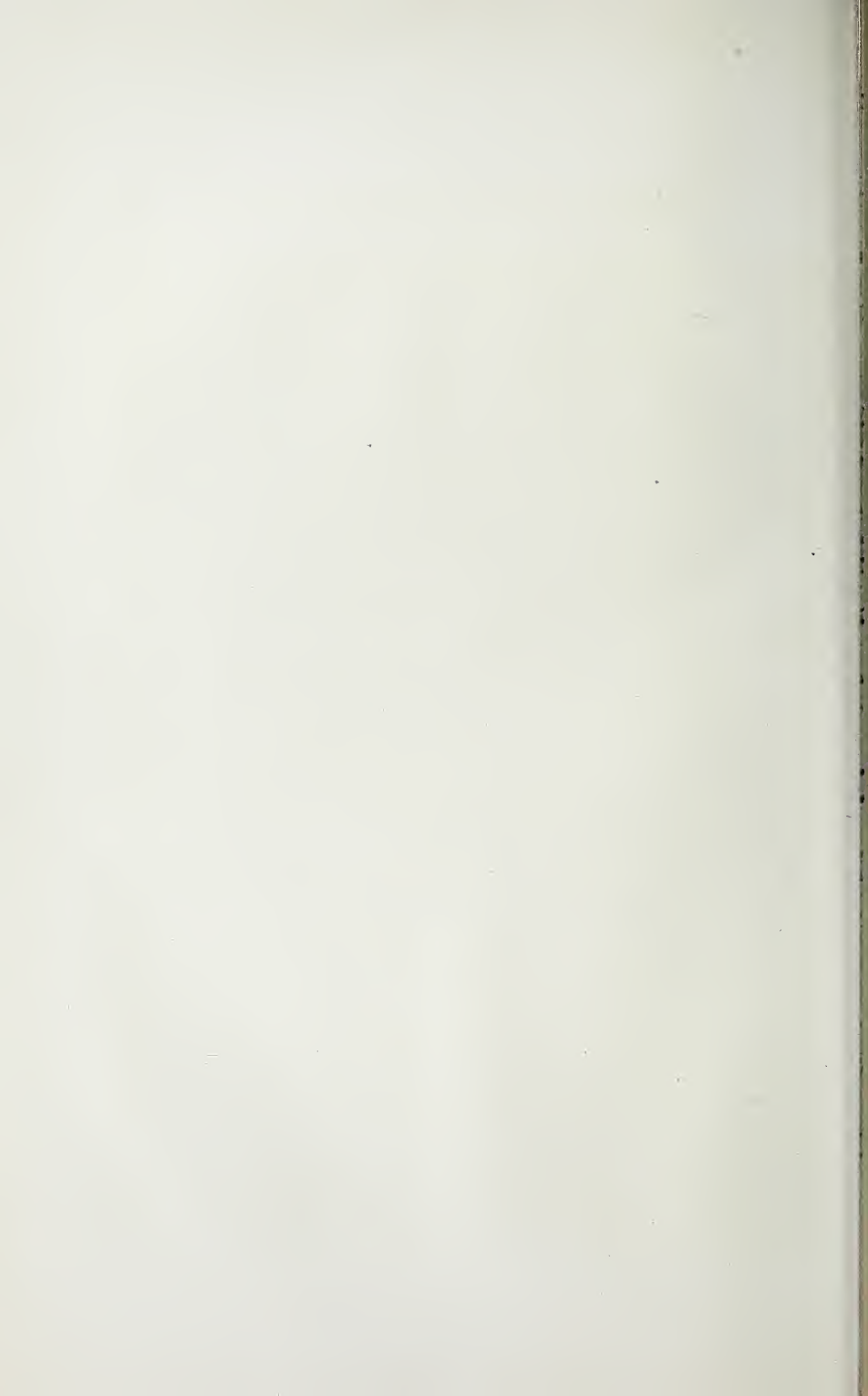
Mr. Eliot lost his books and all personal effects and freely resigned his salary. The taxes for maintenance of army and state were so large that our people submitted to the most meagre fare and the most distressing conditions, yet without complaint or any relaxing of effort. It was verily a trial by fire.

Three days after the destruction of the village "the church and society met and with the pastor carried on religious services as usual at the house of Deacon Bulkley."



Congregational Church, Fairfield, Conn.

Built 1747. Burned by the British 1779.



The sermon which Mr. Eliot preached on this first occasion of public worship after the loss of the meeting-house was preserved and placed in the corner-stone of a later structure. What a scene arises before us? Grief, indignation, resolute purpose, exalted hope—they all contended for supremacy in the hearts of that stricken company. Charred and smoking ruins, tall, sentinel chimneys, masses of broken and ash covered furniture, singed and blackened vegetation—these were the things seen on that Lord's Day morning when the patriots gathered for worship. But there was no minor note struck in that service. It was a full rounded chorus of praise. The minister taught that God led his people day by day through all the riot of storm and that a bright star of hope shone strong and clear above the horizon.

Worship was held in various private houses for more than a year. When the new Town House was complete the congregation gathered beneath its roof and continued their services in that place until the new meeting-house was covered and prepared for use. The strong men of the parish rallied at the call of the minister and work soon assumed something of its former character.

But it became speedily evident that Fairfield had lost its prestige and glory. Business was diverted to Newfield the adjoining town. That enterprising settlement had a fair harbor and manifested a lively spirit of thrift. Fairfield's extremity proved to be Newfield's opportunity. The older settlement was never to regain the leadership which it had once enjoyed. Nevertheless the First Church of Christ continued its activity, improving the days in faithful service to the parish, stimulating the energies of the patriots and co-operating loyally with the government.

Trinity Church was described as in "a sinking condition." The "indiscreet Mr. Sayre" had deserted his people and sailed away with the British. His work in Fairfield did not add to the

strength of the "Episcopal Separation." It emphasized the antagonism between members of the Established Religion and the loyalists belonging to the Church of England. For a time it appeared that Congregationalism, identified in Connecticut with national independence, had won a signal victory over Episcopacy.

It was problematical what would become of the churches organized and supported through the agency of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. We catch the occasional notes of triumph on the part of our people. But any such feeling was short lived. The political interpretation which had been given to the activity of this Missionary Society was seen to be a mistake. Whatever may have been in the minds of some of the leaders in the English Society, the expectation that the Church of England would enter into the civil life of Connecticut as a shaping force did not prevail to any large extent among the members of that church in the colony. And when Independence was achieved any expectation of that kind was forever shattered.

The believers in the Standing Order immediately manifested a more generous and fraternal spirit. All peril from the inroads of the English Missionary Society was now ended since the support of the churches on the part of sympathizers in England ceased. It was largely the heat and bitterness of political strife that had divided the people of Fairfield.

The Reverend Andrew Eliot came of stock historic. He was the great, great grandson of Andrew Eliot who emigrated from Somersetshire, England, the latter part of the seventeenth century and settled in Beverly, Massachusetts—which town he represented in the General Court, 1690. The grand-father of our Andrew was another Andrew who prospered as a merchant in the prosperous city of Boston. The father of our Andrew was another Andrew, the famous Dr. Eliot of the New England capital, long time pastor of the New North Church. A man of learning—eloquent, industrious and popular—a leader of men

and a generous public servant—his influence extended far and wide through city and country. In 1767 the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Edinburgh University. In 1765 he was chosen a member of the Corporation of Harvard University. In 1769 he was earnestly solicited to become president of Harvard, which honor he declined. In 1773 he was actually selected for the office and again refused it, preferring to remain pastor of the church to which he devoted his life. When Boston was blockaded he remained in the city in order to minister to his people and the isolated beleaguered citizens of the place—his family tarrying here in Fairfield during the period. A volume of his sermons is one of the treasures of our Historical Society. It was the custom in those days to distribute mourning rings among the friends of the deceased. The pastor of the New North Church possessed a large and curious collection of these strange funeral emblems.

This man of marked worth and distinction bequeathed a precious legacy of helpful associations and impulses to his son, the pastor of this parish during the formative period of the American Republic.

Our Andrew was born in 1743 and was educated in Boston and Cambridge, graduating from Harvard in 1762. He was elected Librarian of the College and became accustomed to the ravage of fire when in 1764 the old College building was burned and he lost all his personal belongings. In 1768 as a recognition of his good scholarship, young Eliot was appointed tutor and in 1773 he was elected a Fellow of Harvard. The esteem and affection of his pupils has an historic memorial in the chaste, massive, loving cup presented to him on leaving College—a memorial which his descendants keep to-day with tender regard and devotion.

Mr. Eliot was a collector of historical documents, a lover of literature, a student of events. The correspondence which he carried on for many years with relatives and friends covers the

discussion of numerous questions. His sermons and addresses on Election Day and other important occasions show breadth of knowledge, firm grasp of public affairs, a progressive spirit and a generous culture. Mr. Eliot gathered the published Election sermons of the ministers who had preached before the Connecticut Legislature and presented the collection to the Massachusetts Historical Society. He prepared various papers on learned subjects. He was a most genial and agreeable host, entertaining a long succession of notable guests in his home. His affability, social graces, learning, toleration, abounding charity and kindly appreciation made him a commanding figure in the life of this town for a generation.

The General Association of Connecticut met with Mr. Eliot during the troublous days of the war, June 17, 1777. In 1790 Mr. Eliot was appointed one of the Committee on Union between Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

When Mr. Eliot came to this parish, it was not in the same controversial spirit as that which moved Mr. Hobart. Mr. Eliot was a broad-minded gentleman who had through years affiliated with men of the Church of England faith. The political aspects of religion inevitably arrayed him on the side of the Established Religion and made him an intense partisan; but when the war was over his partisanship passed and he manifested on various occasions a liberal, Christ-like spirit.

In the address which Bishop Seabury made at the primary Convention in Middletown, he refers to the changed attitude of our ministers. "They have not only manifested a spirit of benevolence, but an exalted Christian charity," he remarks, "for which our gratitude is due, and shall be paid in paying all their just demands. As the same disposition appears in the ministers of our neighboring churches to live in Christian harmony with us, we are all ready to meet them upon the same ground, with a sincerity like their own."

Trinity Church continued a precarious and uncertain exist-

ence during these days. The desertion of Mr. Sayre, the banishment of loyalists, the loss of property, the destruction of the edifice in which they had been accustomed to worship, the inevitable prosecutions which had been aimed at various troublesome individuals identified with Trinity—these things combined to wreck the hope of such people as clung to the Church of England. And yet, there was a faithful remnant which rallied and when in 1790 Jonathan Sturges and Thaddeus Burr, members of the Prime Ancient Society, were appointed to drive a stake where the people of Trinity Church might erect on Mill Plain a new edifice, the old time spirit of suspicion and hostility had been allayed, relations between the members of the two churches had assumed a friendly character and the town rejoiced in a good degree of harmony.

Opposition to the Standing Order had taken a fresh aspect after the new states were confederated in the Union. The Separatists in Connecticut became an active force. Baptists and Methodists began to multiply. These people trained with the Episcopalians in a vigorous campaign which had for its object the dis-establishment of the Established Religion. The conflict did not evince that rancour and hatred which darkened the former relations existing between men of the Standing Order and men of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; but the purpose to bring about a separation between church and state in Connecticut was a common bond between men of the most contradictory creeds and it awakened the brethren of the Congregational Faith to the fact that the very genius of their democratic church was inherently and logically opposed to the union which had flourished in Connecticut since the Fundamental Orders of 1650 had been enacted. It required years of incessant attack and varied warfare to open the eyes of our orthodox, conservative people to the truth, and during this protracted and vexatious struggle temper, patience, charity were subjected to a severe strain in both ranks of the contestants.

When the new order of things came and all churches in the commonwealth stood on an equal footing in the eyes of the law, many brethren in the Establishment felt that religion had received a shock from which it might never recover. "The injury done to the cause of Christ, as we then supposed," writes Dr. Lyman Beecher at a later date "was irreparable. For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the State of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God."

On the occasion when church and state separated in Connecticut the faces of the people upon the streets of Fairfield betrayed the party to which they belonged. The air of mourning and a sense of defeat prevailed among the members of the Congregational Church. It was a glad day however for the people of Trinity for they now had an equal opportunity with their former antagonists and they cherished a secret hope that the impulse lost during the trying days of the American Revolution might re-assert itself and push to leadership in the town and the commonwealth.

CHAPTER XII.

LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL REFORM.

WE have observed that this church actively identified itself with the various important movements in the religious life of the colony and state. It stood for the Fundamental Orders of the United Colonies in 1650. It agreed to the Principles of the Cambridge Synod. It received into high favor the Saybrook Platform. The system of Consociationism had no other supporter more loyal and true. It opposed the Separationists with all the force of its life. It frowned upon the irrational methods of the New Lights. It fought unflinchingly the battles of the Established Religion as against the encroachments of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. And it put the force of its life into a loyal support of the Standing Order—Rev. Andrew Eliot, A. M., Judge Jonathan Sturges, Hon. Roger M. Sherman, and Rev. Heman Humphrey D. D., the representatives in this later conflict.

We also note that it entered with characteristic energy into the reform movements which mark the first years of the nineteenth century. Mr. Eliot and Timothy Dwight had been congenial and intimate neighbors for many years before the latter gentleman accepted the presidency of Yale College. The influence of Dr. Dwight was felt in all parts of the town where he preached and conducted his school. It was his helpful impulse which did so much to arouse the spirit of the new century and push forward the evangelical movement. The sermons which kindled the fires of faith in Yale College were flames of truth which had illumined Greenfield Hill and the larger territory of the Prime Ancient Society.

When Rev. Heman Humphrey came to Fairfield, the oppor-

tunity was ripe for an aggressive movement. The churches felt the need of revival. One of the first acts of this young courageous man was to attack the old Half-Way Covenant. This people had been loyal to it so long as it was believed that it contained any certain good for the church. But that period had passed away. Intellectual assent to a creed and the purpose to lead a clean life did not meet the requirements of the occasion. The New Light spirit communicated its grace to the Old Light disciple. It was voted in this church that christian experience was a necessary credential for admission into the fellowship of Christ. So Mr. Humphrey set about preparing a new church roll—purging the old register of waste and dead material—gathering together into a vital relation of fraternity and service such people as were glad to come forward and bear witness to the love of Christ in the heart.

It was said that many when they "owned the covenant," had no idea of thereby "becoming members of the church." But such people were requested to take six months for self-examination, after which it was permitted them to come into full communion with the church, if they desired, on assenting to the new confession of faith and the covenant recently adopted. But if any of these people elected otherwise or neglected to act in the matter they were to be considered as "voluntarily withdrawing themselves from all connection with the church and to be on the same standing with those who have never owned the covenant."

As a result of this action the roll was shortened until it held simply the names of individuals who made a public confession of Christ. This number was small when the change in method was adopted. But Mr. Humphrey threw himself with great zeal and fervour into evangelistic work among his people. These faithful labors soon made deep impression—a quickening of faith spread among the parish—the interest in religion became general and large numbers entered upon the christian life.

The re-action against spiritual lethargy and decadence which

had marked the period of the American Revolution was now working with great force. It soon manifested itself in various reform measures. A deepened life is the strongest moral incentive. Mr. Humphrey became profoundly concerned in respect to the subject of intemperance.

Drunkenness prevailed to an alarming extent in the parish and throughout all New England and the states. Its inroads upon society were terrific. The public conscience needed to be awakened.

Lyman Beecher writes in his "Autobiography" that "there had been already so much alarm on the subject, that at the General Association at Fairfield 1811, a committee of three had been appointed to make inquiries and report measures to remedy the evil." This committee reported next year and action was taken looking to an energetic and enthusiastic campaign against Intemperance.

The Fairfield Consociation became aroused and a committee of three members was requested to prepare an address. Mr. Humphrey was a member of this committee and the report which was prepared and widely circulated is said to have been largely the work of his mind. In February 1813, Mr. Humphrey commenced publishing a series of articles on the subject. Sermons, lectures, addresses and newspaper discussions mightily stirred the people. The church here became a strong temperance society working energetically in the town and the county for the great ends in view.

At this time Fairfield was still the half shire capital—the lawyers and litigants assembled here for Court—social life flourished much in the same way that had been characteristic of pre-Revolutionary days—culture, refinement, wealth, quiet prosperity and prestige of early importance continued to prevail. But the curse of intemperance had crept serpent-like into the various strata of society—the tone of social life being especially affected by the convivial habits and customs of the Fairfield Bar.

The gentlemen composing this galaxy of legal lights were learned, affable, high-minded—sticklers for old time courtesy and the delightful fellowship of by-gone days. The influence of such witty, prosperous men—leaders in society and state affairs—was necessarily broad-spread. But in meeting these perplexing conditions Mr. Humphrey had the hearty, splendid co-operation of the most learned and eloquent lawyer among them—Judge Roger M. Sherman, a nephew of the senior Roger, Signer of the Declaration of Independence. Judge Sherman was a deacon in the church, devout, gifted in spiritual graces, the intellectual peer of Daniel Webster (by common testimony), and a strong, robust, masterful personality.

In his loyalty to principle he became a total abstainer from the use of intoxicants as a beverage; the riches of his logical mind were freely devoted to an earnest contention for the faith that was in him. His influence was a tremendous factor in the progress of the new creed—the teetotalers' creed—and this work continued on his part throughout life.

Mr. Humphrey was the first pastor of this church who did not die here in the pastorate. His eminence and leadership opened for him larger and more important fields of labor so that he was constrained to give himself to service elsewhere; but his place was speedily and happily filled by a man after his own heart. And when Mr. Hewit assumed the pastoral charge of this church he publicly announced that his parishioners must not expect him to join with them in taking the social glass.

It has been the immemorial custom to brighten the ordination and installation of ministers with a liberal supply of various liquors. This refreshment was sometimes furnished by individuals, more often by the Ecclesiastical Society. Meetings of Con-sociation did much in the way of transacting business and quickening religious life, but they frequently emphasized good fellowship to a degree that disturbed and distressed some of the brethren.

It was also a stereotyped fashion to give the minister his glass of toddy when he made afternoon calls upon his people. A series of calls extending through a long summer's afternoon gave occasion for many glasses. He must be a level-headed man who was able to submit to this mistaken hospitality and reach home with unbefuddled brain. In face of these facts the announcement of Mr. Hewit had considerable significance, although some of his parishioners under Mr. Humphrey's lead had banished the social glass from their side-boards.

Consistent with his purpose Mr. Hewit threw himself with redoubled energy into his fight against the awful enemy. The force of his leadership in this great reform brought him more prominently to the front than his predecessor.

Dr. Hewit was a magnificent orator. Few men in the country equalled him in his palmy days. A rich, deep musical voice which carried with subtile power, a voice which responded to his slightest thought or emotion, with the most delicate sympathy and discrimination—a stalwart, dominating physique inured to hard work—a vigorous, well-trained, well-stored mind—a vital religious experience—these all contributed to a personality which was bound to make itself felt in any community.

The church here had become widely known under Dr. Humphrey as a staunch champion of the Temperance movement, but the zeal and eloquence of Dr. Hewit put the reform to the very forefront and elected him to an unquestioned leadership in the state and the country at large.

His theological and ecclesiastical conservatism thrived here in a congenial atmosphere. He was one with leaders like Judge Sherman to protest against the disintegrating tendencies manifest in certain parts of the state and New England. Staunchest among the orthodox he proclaimed the gospel in the familiar terms of ancient symbols. It was said that the sternness of his orthodoxy resulted in the loss to the Puritan Faith of his son Augustus who became in later years the distinguished spiritual

head of the Paulist Fathers. However that may be Dr. Hewit impressed himself upon the parish and community in no ordinary way and confirmed his people in their loyalty to old standards and the church ways inherited from the fathers.

His influence and that of this church was large in determining the course of events in the Fairfield West Consociation. The questions which came before this local association of churches were generally viewed from the conservative standpoint, although the Consociation, as we shall see, finally yielded to the pressure of changing times and modified its interpretation of Consociationism. In the Fairfield West Association of Ministers Dr. Hewit stood for the orthodoxy represented by the new school organized in 1833 at East Windsor. For years he acted as trustee of the Seminary.

It was no easy matter to champion old fashioned orthodoxy or new fashioned total abstinence during the days when Dr. Hewit served this parish. The congregation, as Dr. Atwater has reminded us, "was largely composed of men high in the legal profession and in public life, and of people of that grade of culture and refinement which would naturally result from its having been for nearly two centuries, not only a business centre, but the county and court town. The Sabbath assemblies too, were often graced with the presence of the most eminent lawyers and civilians from all parts of the state." He must needs be a fearless and independent man who would stick to the old paths of the fathers in his theological teaching when there were among his hearers many who represented the later interpretation of truth. And he must likewise be a fearless, independent man who pushed eagerly, aggressively ahead in the unpopular social reforms which would inevitably offend a greater or less number of people touched by his antagonism to their business or their practices. But Dr. Hewit was consistently loyal to his faith and purpose, undisturbed by opposition or censure.

It was his splendid service in the state which attracted the

attention of the American Temperance Society. A committee of sagacious men from this association settled with unanimity and enthusiasm upon the choice of Dr. Hewit for secretary.

This church granted him a temporary leave of absence when he visited the neighboring states and organized many Temperance Societies. Such was his success in this work that the Boston people urged him to resign the pastorate and devote his time to their Society. "This was the great sacrifice of his life, to take up the burdens and trials of itinerant lecturing in exchange for the home and study and pulpit and flock he so loved," remarks one of his eulogists. "Of the astounding eloquence and prodigious effects of these discourses," writes Dr. Atwater, "I have often heard in forms and from quarters so various, as to leave little doubt that what Luther was to the Reformation, Whitfield to the Revival of 1740, Wesley to primitive Methodism that was Nathaniel Hewit to the early Temperance reformation."

The changes wrought in social conditions among the people of this region were noteworthy. The reform movement initiated by Dr. Humphrey was pushed to a consummation by Dr. Hewit. The church was like a strong society organized for the promotion of social as well as spiritual progress. The work of teachers such as the two ministers named was efficiently supplemented by the splendid co-operation of Judge Sherman who was foremost in all endeavor to help men to a better manhood and strengthen the church in its many sided service to the state.

Through the years of theological and ecclesiastical transition—through the years of religious unrest and spiritual quickening—Judge Sherman stood loyally by the chosen leader of this people—giving much thought, time, sympathy and encouragement to his fellow-workers—helping to sustain the high character of service—contributing the necessary means to enhance the usefulness of christian enterprises—and witnessing by word and deed to the realness and vitality of a faith which was rooted in the scheme of doctrines taught by Edwards and Dwight.

Stability and conservatism characterized the church life and yet the energy and wisdom of these remarkable leaders forbade stagnation, indifference, or a relapse into coldness and sterility. There were several seasons when the community enjoyed a quickened spiritual life, many coming into the membership of the church. There was a fresh adaptation of methods and institutions—the Sunday School grew into an important branch of church work—the Missionary Society became an active and popular agency—female prayer meetings were held from house to house—the Charitable Society was organized and reached out a helping hand to the poor and distressed—house to house visitation with a purpose of drawing the people into closer relations with the church was practiced on the part of faithful workers—a robust, aggressive christian life being regnant in the community.



THE FIFTH HOUSE OF WORSHIP

CHAPTER XIII.

CO-WORKERS IN DEFENCE OF ORTHODOXY.

WHEN the court deserted Fairfield and the streets were no longer trodden by lawyers and litigants, the town assumed its present aspect. A quiet, dignified and aristocratic residential place, there was little to disturb the even tenor of daily life. No longer a Port of Entry or a town with many shops and stores or the capital of the county, it settled down into the ease and reserve, the tranquil self-sufficiency and good will which mark the typical ancient well-to-do New England community.

The church had been generous in sending off company after company to organize daughter churches in various parts of the original parish—the people of Southport and Black Rock being the last members to withdraw from the Prime Ancient Society—the one in 1843 and the other in 1848.

These depletions, although large and important, did not seriously weaken the parent organization. On the contrary such changes inspired the mother church to renewed activity and enlarged hope. The work was broadened and multiplied through the various off-shoots springing from the original root. The spirit of sympathy, co-operation and mutual helpfulness prevailed. The narrower limits of the parish to which the mother church ministered, intensified the work and gave opportunity for a more particular watchcare.

The changes which came over the parish during the pastorate of Dr. Atwater signified a steady and normal advance although it must be remembered that Fairfield itself had entered upon that period of staid and tranquil life which has continued down to the new century. The chaste and handsome meeting-house which was reared in 1849 and 1850, the most ornate and

expensive which had stood on the historic site, was the first one built by voluntary subscription, the expense of other edifices being largely defrayed by taxation, necessary accompaniment of a state church.

Dr. Atwater was deeply involved in the theological controversies which agitated the churches of Connecticut during the years of his pastoral service. He was a born controversialist, but even in the fiery ardor of his youth, as President Porter remarks, "he was chivalrous in his feelings and never ceased to honor the antagonists whom he assailed." His activity in criticism, debate and controversy involved the church over which he had been set as shepherd. Perhaps it is a better statement of the case to say that the church chose him to the pastorate and sustained him in his leadership because he frankly and fearlessly advocated the views and beliefs which were dear to members of this parish—a parish "sturdily yet decorously conservative in all its traditions and ways," according to the recollection of Dr. Porter.

It was at the parsonage in Fairfield that the Fairfield West Association of Ministers met on January 8th, 1850 "to consider the sentiments of Dr. Bushnell as published in a book entitled 'God in Christ.'" Dr. Atwater and two other brethren were appointed a committee to report upon the subject at the next meeting.

The Remonstrance and Complaint, being adopted by the Association, was sent to the Moderator of the Hartford Central Association in which Dr. Bushnell was a member. The answer to this communication was read at the annual meeting of the Fairfield West Association May 27th, 1851 and referred to a committee of three, Dr. Atwater being one of the number. After several meetings of the committee a report was adopted, printed and distributed among the ministers of the state. Then a Memorial was addressed to the General Association.

The earnest and conscientious labors of Dr. Atwater through-

out the controversy, witness to the strength of his orthodoxy and the zeal of his championship. Dr. Hewit was his loyal ally and eloquent helper. A great fear dominated these men and many brethren. The church in Fairfield shared the distressful anxiety. Were the churches to be rent asunder as they had been at an earlier day in a neighboring state? We review the conflict of opinion and observe that such fears were comparatively groundless. We think upon our debt to Dr. Bushnell and then stand amazed that such antagonism and hostility on the part of good people was ever manifested.

The relations between Dr. Atwater and the three men whom he opposed with all his might in a theological way were peculiar. Dr. Taylor had been the pastor whom he as a child revered and loved. Dr. Leonard Bacon was his pastor during a later period, esteemed and honored not less than Dr. Taylor. Dr. Bushnell was known to him as the eminent preacher and brilliant writer—one engaged in the pursuits most congenial to his own tastes and impulses. Friendly in his associations with these men, he became their pronounced and consistent opponent in all the polemic warfare which waged for years among the churches of the old Establishment.

What was then called the "New Divinity" did not win acceptance in this conservative parish. It had been the practical excesses attending revivalism far more than the metaphysical theology which offended here. President Porter remarks that it was "shallow conceptions of Christian experience," "fanatical applications with respect to the Christian life," "violence to the refined humanities into which centuries of Christian culture had blossomed," which Dr. Atwater and his people refused to tolerate. The community was one which emphasized the virtues and manners of the early generation. An atmosphere of reverence pervaded the church. The solid worth and dignified bearing of the men who constituted the guiding, governing force in the Society gave commanding character to ordinary christian

activities. Old time courtesy still held sway. The type of manhood represented by Judge Sherman was the prevailing ideal.

And there was another active, faithful member of the parish church whose name must be linked with the names of men like Dr. Atwater and Judge Sherman. For many years Judge Thomas Burr Osborne stood side by side with these men in the interpretation of theological and ecclesiastical matters. A representative in the state legislature repeatedly—Judge of Probate and Judge of the Superior Court—a member of Congress for two terms, a clerk of the County Court, “he was justly regarded as one of the pillars of society.” “He thought deeply at all times, on the great points of doctrinal and practical theology,” says his eulogist. “But the more he thought and inquired, the more firmly he rested in the ancient faith and order of the Church of Connecticut in which he had been born and reared.”

Judge Osborne was a man of strong convictions but he was reserved in their expression. The theological support which he gave his pastor during the years of conflict was loyal and consistent, but it took the shape of quiet sympathy and fraternal encouragement. Judge Sherman likewise had strong convictions on the church questions of the day. But as he was a natural orator, a man wonderfully gifted in the way of public speech, his support shaped itself into the form of public address. On many an occasion he stood in the minister's place and spoke with an eloquence and power unforgettable. A profound student of the Scriptures, a man of great breadth of learning, a master in the use of words, clear, logical, felicitous, he was a teacher who spake with authority. A very tower of strength to the church through the early years of the nineteenth century when infidelity was rife in the land, he became not less the defender of the faith during the later period when he believed that erring brethren within the pale of the church misinterpreted the Word of God and imperilled the trust committed to them by the fathers.

It is evident that with such leaders as Dr. Atwater, Judge

Sherman and Judge Osborn the church would not diverge from the beaten path and its voice would give forth no uncertain sound.

Dr. Atwater's article in the Princeton Review for October, 1853, and his paper on Dr. Bushnell in the Presbyterian Review for January 1881 set forth the writer's attitude toward the author of "God in Christ" and illustrate the fine qualities of heart and head characteristic of the pastor of this church.

The first three men who succeeded him in the pastorate—Dr. Willis Lord, Dr. Alexander McLean and Dr. E. E. Rankin followed essentially the line of teaching marked out by Dr. Atwater and Dr. Hewit, the sturdy, learned exponents of Dwight's Calvinism.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONSOCIATIONISM OLD AND NEW.

BUT these were years when the ecclesiastical constitution of things in Connecticut passed through great changes. The spirit of protest against the old state church continued or revived in the shape of a desire and purpose to change the character of the Consociations and make them simply local Conferences devoid of any authority. This appeared to many of the churches a logical outcome of dis-establishment. The movement declared itself in the Fairfield West Consociation early in the seventies. At that time Connecticut had ten Consociations and twelve Conferences. The movement had advanced to its consummation in various parts of the state.

The committee appointed by our Consociation issued a Report in October 1875, suggesting to the churches such a change as would bring their organization into harmony with those of other states. "Consociationism is exceptional to Congregationalism," this paper observed, "and territorially it is of very limited extent . . . So far as we know, there are no Consociations in the world, outside Connecticut." Holding to the view that this form of ecclesiastical fraternity and government was antagonistic to true Congregationalism the committee, after discussing the weaknesses and demerits of the system, recommended that our churches adopt a new constitution and form themselves into a local Conference.

This Report was answered by a paper addressed "To the Churches of the Fairfield West Consociation" in which four of the brethren stated "Considerations in favor of Consociation." One of the writers of this paper was Dr. Rankin, then pastor of this church and a loyal champion of the venerable

ecclesiastical body to which this church belonged. The objections to the ancient form of organization were examined by these four brethren and combatted with force and acumen. They agreed with Dr. Hawes that "the good working of the system for a hundred and fifty years shows that the father of the system did not attach too much importance to it. It has exerted a most happy and efficient influence in preserving the faith and order of our churches and it has secured to them a measure of peace and prosperity unsurpassed by any other equal number of churches in the land."

But an interpretation different from that of the fathers had already been given to the offices of the Consociation. We find that in 1846, answering certain questions propounded by the Second Church of Greenwich, Fairfield West had announced that "As concerns the relation of Consociation to Consociated Churches and its power over them, it disclaims and always has disclaimed all legislative power In cases of difficulty and discipline submitted to Consociation by the Churches, it simply gives advice." This astonishing statement reveals the imperfect knowledge of the writer. In various cases the Consociation had authoritatively and decisively determined ecclesiastical affairs. This manifest receding from the theory and position of early consociationism was quite in the spirit of the later day, but historic accuracy compels us to correct the mis-statement indicated. At the same time that we note how a change to the loose construction of consociationism was given to the purpose and method of the old body.

Several times within the past half century brethren in the Consociation have proposed a modification of rules and constitution. One after another the so called objectionable features of the body have been eliminated. As the Consociation now remains it is simply a Standing Council serving in the settlement of ministers and the dissolution of pastorates, giving advice on all occasions when summoned for that purpose seeking to

promote the fellowship of the churches and the common advance of christian work. But so far as this church is related to it, we observe that there has always prevailed here in the Fairfield parish an unswerving loyalty to the original Consociation idea and a deep, genuine affection for such a strong, unifying, helpful and conservative ecclesiastical organization.

The vital principles involved in this form of Congregationalism—we refer simply to ecclesiastical matters—have to do with a Standing Council which becomes a permanent body with historic continuity—a certain friendly oversight extended to the churches within its territory—the hearty co-operation of these churches in all that concerns the advantage and prosperity of the kingdom—the authority of influence in cases which seek adjudication, at its hands—and a fraternal unification of such church life and work as becomes related to the company of churches which constitute the Consociation. Bald independency is deprecated. In union there is strength, efficiency and progress.

Reverting again to the Fairfield interpretation of the Saybrook system we read that at a Consociation or meeting of Elders and Messengers of the county of Fairfield at Stratfield March 16th, 1708-9, the Rev. Joseph Webb and Deacon John Thomson and Mr. Samuel Cobbett being present to represent this church—it was voted "That ye Pastors met in Consociation have power with ye Consent of the Messengers of our Chhs chosen and attending, Authoritatively, Judicially and Decisively to determine ecclesiastical affairs brot to their Cognizance according to the Word of God and that our Pastors with the concurrence and consent of the Messengers of our Chhes to be chosen and that shall attend upon all future occasions, have like Authoritative, Judicial and Decisive power of Determination of affairs ecclesiasticall, and that in further and fuller meetings of two Consociations together compliant with ye conclusions of ye sd Council at Saybrook, there be the like Authoritative, Judicial and Decisive power of Determination of Ecclesiastical affairs according to ye word of God." The vote was unanimous.

This signified a strong system of ecclesiastical government. The modifications which followed dis-establishment have led many to think that it is a system which had its day and is now relegated altogether to the past. "But there can be no question," as Professor Walker remarks, "that it has essentially modified the Congregationalism of America from what it would have been without the example of Connecticut." The compactness of our church life during the Colonial period—the mutual helpfulness and oversight manifested—annual meetings and a general co-operation in work—these things have illustrated a method and set an example of ecclesiastical procedure which meets the need and wins the attention of Congregationalists throughout our country to-day.

The recent National Council emphasizes this fact. What does it mean when our Committee on Polity says that there is "a general movement, more definite and marked in some sections than in others, towards the closer organization and unification of our varied interests"—that action had been taken in several western states and in many associations which places "fresh interpretation upon the function of our local and state organizations in the interests of larger unity and efficiency?" What does it mean when this committee says that "such supervision of the work of the churches has become imperative from the necessities of the situation?" "The waning use of the ecclesiastical council and its inadequacy to the demands and needs of the churches, the languishing condition of many feeble fields, the lack of supervisory care and the complex character of our agencies and organizations call for the initiation of a more truly representative and congregational system of administration."

It is perfectly apparent to a student of history in this Consociation that the movement means a reversion to our strong, aggressive type of Congregationalism, whatever terms may be employed and details of action may be adopted.

It was unanimously voted by the National Council in accord-

ance with the recommendation of this committee "That larger recognition be given to the place of the local association of churches as a conciliar body."

What is that action but a cordial recognition of the usefulness and necessity of a standing council—a Consociation—a body which has historic continuity—an organization which perpetually holds the interests of local churches at heart and serves them in every possible way at the same time that it ministers to the general prosperity of the churches in the state and takes its stated part in the management of church affairs in the commonwealth?


So the recommendation goes on to say that this local, permanent body which must necessarily have lodged with it a greater or less measure of leadership, initiative, watchcare and influence—these things all freely given on the part of the churches without any disturbing sense of loss but with a real sense of increased efficiency and aggressiveness—the recommendation goes on to say that this conciliar body or standing council is "to act in co-operation with the state and national organizations in the interests of the churches; and that in view of its close relation to the churches composing it, its own life and autonomy be carefully safeguarded by the continuance of such direct representation as now maintains in the constituted membership of the National Council."

It is perfectly evident that such a movement as has been described is widely at variance with primitive Congregationalism, but it is likewise evident that it runs parallel with the fundamental ideas and purposes of the Connecticut leaders who gave the peculiar Consociation form to our polity, and that while certain details are unfamiliar to our forms, in a general way it appropriates the principles which have given a sort of unique distinction to the churches of the former Established Religion in this state.

The stronger, better organization—which the committee believes will result "in the larger provision for the care and

oversight of the churches"—is essentially our Consociationism adopting another name, modified and expanded to meet local and national conditions. And the drift is irresistible, it seems to me, as well as beneficent and rich with promise.

There is a certain quiet, gracious satisfaction in the thought that our church has been consistent and loyal in its advocacy and championship of that kind of Congregationalism which did such notable service in the early years and which appeals with such force to the popular demand of our day.



CHAPTER XV.

FORMS AND CUSTOMS.

THE General Association of Connecticut at the annual meeting in New London, June 1808, recommended that the churches of our state constitute a committee "to attend to all matters of discipline which may require the attention of the church." In conformity with the recommendation, this church appointed a standing committee on the 5th day of September 1819. It had always been the custom to attend to matters of discipline in the open meeting. But the feeling prevailed that a wiser way was to be followed in committing these matters primarily to the chosen restricted number—composed of pastor, deacons and other men of weight—the church waiting upon their judgment and suggestion in respect to further proceedings.

Four years later it was also voted that the examination of candidates for admission to the church be referred to this standing committee. Formerly the pastor had been accustomed to attend to this matter and propound the candidates for church membership. The meetings of the committee were held one or two weeks previous to the regular communion service.

It was natural that these stated gatherings of the committee should become occasions when the affairs of the church were discussed and plans for work took shape. The practical result was a body which eventually exercised to a greater or less degree the functions of a "session," although its deliberations and suggestions were reported to the church for acceptance or rejection as the case might be.

Such changes as we have recorded show a strong trend in the direction of orderliness, systematic action and hearty co-

operation at the same time that due regard is given to individual liberty and the self-government of the church. There has been a healthful and interesting evolution of the basic principles of our polity—showing an elasticity and adaptedness abounding in promise for the future.

Subscription to the creed as a pre-requisite to membership in the church had prevailed through all the generations, although the creed itself had been changed by the church more than once and the covenant modified. But such subscription was finally abandoned in 1895 and candidates admitted to membership upon a statement of their christian experience—the larger liberty interpreting the spirit of the day.

The stream of life flowing through the church during these generations has never been checked by any action or utterance of a Cambridge Synod, a Saybrook Platform or a National Council, although the creeds named have received due honor on the part of our church and contributed their part to the history of the parish. And the conservatism which has been a conspicuous feature in our ecclesiastical activities has never been a hostile or unfruitful element in the life of the church. In fact fresh and vigorous methods of work seem to have linked themselves naturally with the spirit of the fathers. These leaders were aggressive men, awake to the demands of the day, whole-heartedly devoted to the interests of the church and the kingdom.

When we consider the changes through which churches of this commonwealth have passed—the intensity of feeling often manifest among brethren—the various questions both doctrinal and practical which have agitated the people—the checkered history of our town—it is a circumstance well worth grateful recognition that, as Dr. Atwater remarks, “this church and society have through their entire existence been peculiarly blessed with peace and free from internal and self-destructing dissensions.”

The old churches like Windsor, Hartford, Weathersfield,

New Haven, Milford, Stratford and Guilford were at one time or another grievously disturbed by controversy and turmoil. But there is no record of any convulsion in this parish. There have been cases of discipline—ebbs and floods in the condition of affairs—opposition to the departure of good men when they desired to organize a new parish, as was the case in 1695 when the Stratfield church received its charter of privilege from the General Court—politico-religious conflicts between champions of the Established Religion and the missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts—but that is the extent of disturbance in the parish. The Consociation was never called “to heal any breach or adjust any discord.” Truthfully has it been said that “the annals of few parishes present a current of affairs so universally peaceful and happy.”

Meanwhile this church has been called to the work of settling difficulties in other parishes on various occasions and has sought with kindness and sympathy to discharge such a delicate task in the most hopeful way. Thanks have been extended to the parish by various sister organizations for the gracious exercise of these important fraternal offices.

The custom of giving to the deacons a life tenure of office was the last of ancient ways to be changed but, the transition to an election for the period of three years was easily made in 1899 so that in this respect the church adjusted itself quietly to the modern fashion.

The introduction of fresh and unfamiliar forms or methods is something that has wrought much havoc in many churches. The spirit of this people has been happily responsive when the innovations were suggested in the wise and gracious manner characteristic of the honorable leaders.

Music has done as much to embroil congregations perhaps as any other single agent. But this people used one Psalm book after another according to the popular demand of the day,

advancing amicably into hymn books when this better arrangement of praise superseded "Ainsworth's Version," and its successors.

The leadership of the Worshipful John Gold and his brother Samuel Gold in setting and reading the Psalm was in due time displaced by a singing school teacher who by aid of pitch pipe or tuning fork started the choir in its devious vocal evolutions. The base viol and the violin finally slipped into the gallery and assisted the praiseful company. Then came the wonderful harmonicon or melodeon and the full voiced part singing.

The pipe organ and a quartette choir with an occasional chorus reaches the climax of developement. It has been a series of pleasant, well conducted and perfectly harmonious changes through these nine generations—with that measure of discussion and excitement which shows life—each period making the most of its advantages, rejoicing in all contributions of the past and accepting with gratitude the fresh suggestions of the day—conservatism itself finally yielding the point after a healthful display of opposition.

The order of public worship has been subjected to numerous important modifications during these two hundred and seventy years. It was formerly the custom to assemble on the call of drum, horn, shell or signal gun at nine o'clock Sunday morning in the Meeting-House. The first bell hung in the steeple marked a distinct and notable advance—a sweet and emphatic declaration that the community prospered. This was a hundred and fifty years ago. But what were the services to which these various instruments summoned the people?

The simplest order was followed. Mr. Jones made a long prayer, the congregation standing reverently during the exercise. The leader in psalmody lined out the psalm which was sung with little attention to rhythm or harmony. This was followed by the reading of the Scriptures with comment upon the passage. A second psalm and the sermon filled the morning. The hour

glass was sometimes turned by one of the deacons once and sometimes twice, indicating a service of two or three hours in length.

This first order of public worship was modified by some shortening of the prayers and the sermon. Later the new psalmody and the singing school suggested agreeable changes. Anthems were finally introduced—elaborate and wonderful performances which gave vast opportunity for the display of vocal powers. The Bible was finally read without comment, the minister restricting his remarks to the hour for his sermon.

When the nineteenth century dawned the influence of liturgical services over extempore forms began to manifest itself. Ancient hymns appeared in the modern hymn-books. People asked for a more worshipful order of service, one enriched with the treasures inherited from the early centuries. The organ made occasion for the thorough training of singers. The Lord's Prayer came into public use in our sanctuary. Then the psalms were read responsively followed by the "Gloria Patri," and the "Amen" given at the close of each hymn.

The order of service to-day, so unlike the form established by the Puritan dissenters, seems to us after all a natural evolution of the primitive simplicity. For the true enrichment of public worship has chiefly to do with spirit rather than ritual. This was the profound conviction of the fathers. The hollowness, the unreality of much that prevailed under the name of worship drove the first protestants into the extreme plainness of extemporaneous arrangement and utterance. But we have long ago learned the needed lesson so that the happy use of time-honored forms and precious spiritual inheritances is a privilege which we now appreciate and devoutly cherish.

This general modification of form in worship among the churches of our order—kneeling or bowing the head in prayer—reciting the apostles' creed—reading the psalms responsively—joining audibly with the minister in the words of the Lord's Prayer—repeating in concert a Scriptural salutation introducing

worship—singing the Amen at the close of each hymn—chanting the Ten Commandments and the two Laws of Love—this adoption of revered and loved forms is happy evidence that churches of different names and symbols draw close together and throb with the same spirit of devotion and hopefulness.



CHAPTER XVI.

A TREASURY OF LOYAL REMEMBRANCES.

LOYALTY to this venerable parish has been attested in many ways but it is most fitting that some specification of particular gifts should be recorded in order that sons and daughters of the present and future generations shall catch something of inspiration and emulate their predecessors in this happy expression of confidence and affection.

This being a church of the Established Religion until 1818, the property came to the use of the Society by vote of the town. The first edifice erected on the strength of private subscription was the fifth sanctuary, dedicated by Dr. Atwater in 1849.

There had been gifts bestowed out of a loving heart however before that day. Numerous grants of land were made at various times to the ministers by the town. But the first recorded memorial bestowed upon the church was the money for a silver bowl, bequeathed by the Rev. Samuel Wakeman in 1692. Captain Burr was chosen to buy this cup and the sum of three pounds was set apart for the cost.

This good example was followed by his son Captain Joseph Wakeman in 1726, who bequeathed the like sum for the purchase of a silver tumbler for the use of the church.

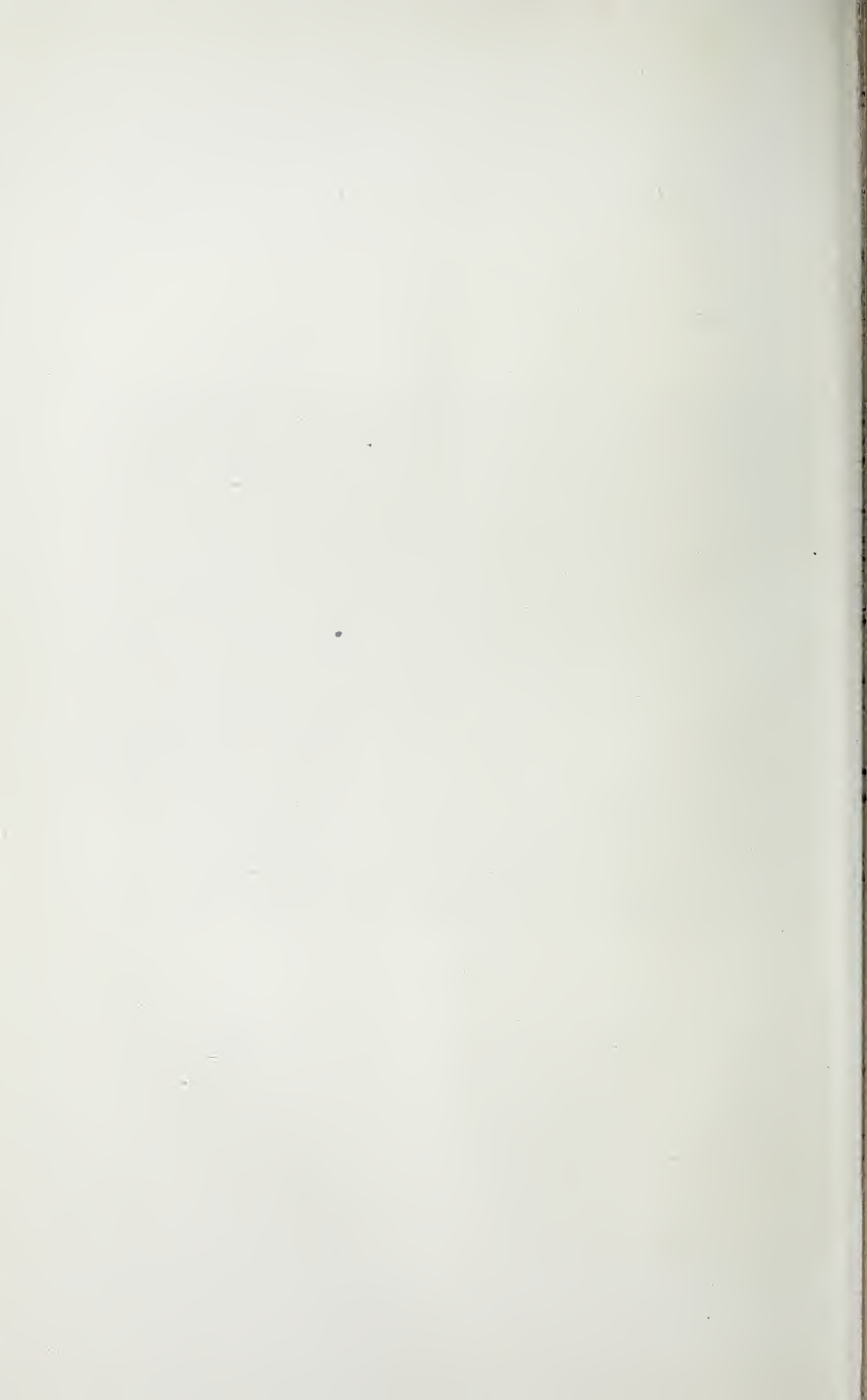
A third cup was given by Jonathan Sturges and has the date 1722 inscribed upon it—commemorative of a devout and useful life.

A fourth gift came from the hand of Captain John Silliman. "I give unto the church aforesaid"—quoting from his will—"my largest silver cup, to be received by said Church after my wife's decease." The date of this gift is 1752.

"Aug. 13th, A. D. 1753. Item"—so runs the will of



THE CHURCH SILVER



Sturges Lewis—"I give and bequeath to the Church of Christ in the First Society in Fairfield of whom the Rev. Mr. Hobart is Pastor, a silver tankard of thirty-three ounces wt., to be procured by my executor. I constitute and appoint my Hon. Father Lothrop Lewis my executor." Three familiar names witness the document—Thaddeus Burr, Lyman Hall (afterward a signer of the Declaration of Independence from the state of Georgia) and Gideon Welles.

A second tankard, antique and massive, was given to the Church of Christ in Fairfield by Thomas Hill Esq.—the date engraved upon the vessel being 1757.

Mrs. E. Wyncoop was the giver of the sixth tumbler or goblet belonging to the communion silver. The commemorative inscription carries the date 1777—a year of severe strain and exigent circumstances in town and colony.

In memory of Mrs. Ellen Lothrop, daughter of Rev. Noah Hobart and wife of Dr. Nathaniel Lothrop of Plymouth, her husband gave the beautiful silver bowl which has served the purpose of a font for several generations. The figures 1780 appear upon the memorial.

This rare, ancient collection of silver is one of the choicest and most interesting communion services in the country. Its historic associations link the names of various eminent families into closest connection with the life of the church. Generation after generation has used these sacred vessels in the solemn fellowship of the Lord's table. Men conspicuous in many spheres of private or public activity are called to mind when we look upon these precious memorials.

The night preceding the capture of General Silliman by the British, May 1st, 1779, was a Saturday night before the bi-monthly communion of the Lord's Supper. General Silliman had turned one side from the affairs of war and prepared the silver for its consecrated uses on the following day, placing the set in his chamber as the room of greatest security. "At a mid-

night hour when we were all asleep," writes Mrs. Silliman in her journal, "the house was attacked." With great presence of mind this lady cast some of her garments over the pieces of silver in one corner of the room so that when the assailants entered that part of the house the treasures were undetected.

Although the marauders seized what family silver they were able to discover, the precious heirlooms belonging to the church remained undisturbed and were used the next day by Mr. Eliot and his congregation in their service.

Mr. Anthony Nonguier in 1740 bequeathed to the church for the support of the ministry, two hundred pounds—the principal to be invested and the interest alone to be used. The bequest became available after the decease of his widow.

Thaddeus Burr, son of Chief Justice Burr and father of Hon. Thaddeus Burr, High Sheriff, left a legacy of ten pounds for the maintenance and support of the Gospel ministry in the Church of Christ, Fairfield. This was in the year 1755.

The will of Miss Sarah Sloss directed that the sum of twenty pounds, lawful money, "be laid out in Books, at the discretion of Rev. Mr. Hobart . . . for the use and benefit of the minister of said Society for the time being, and that the Books may be carefully preserved: my will is that they be under the care and inspection of the minister and deacons of the church. . . and the Justices of the Peace, who shall be in full communion with said church and liable to such orders and regulations as they or the major part of them shall from time to time agree upon." This gift was bestowed in the year 1756, so that Mr. Hobart, whose love of books doubtless influenced Miss Sloss in this beneficence, enjoyed the fruit of her well-doing for nearly eighteen years.

Captain John Silliman who gave his "largest silver cup" to the church in 1752, bequeathed also "unto the Presbyterian Church of Christ in the First Society in Fairfield, the sum of one hundred pounds money, Old Tenor or Equivalent to the

present value thereof in other money the use and interest thereof to be and inure to the benefit of said Church forever." The name Presbyterian is often associated with early Connecticut churches. Mr. Hobart was one of the staunchest champions of certain Presbyterian methods.

A gift of twenty pounds lawful money "unto the Ecclesiastical Society in the first or Prime Society in Fairfield as established by law" came from the estate of Col. James Smedley in 1771. The phrasing of this clause in the will has historic significance.

Ebenezer Burr 2nd, bequeathed the sum of five hundred dollars to the Church and Society, the interest of which was to be paid to a settled pastor who subscribed to the articles of faith adopted by the Church.

Miss Rebecca Downs' legacy—the will was probated June 3rd, 1799—was bestowed upon the "First Presbyterian Society in the Town of Fairfield, whereof Rev. Andrew Eliot is minister; to be and remain for the use and benefit of said Society forever and the annual interest or avails thereof so to be used to defray the annual expense for the support of the Gospel Ministry in said Society." The property devised consisted of some twenty-four acres of land with buildings which was sold in accordance with instructions—and the proceeds of this sale were duly invested in securities.

The Sherman Parsonage—erected by Hon. Roger M. Sherman in 1816—is a commodious and dignified mansion, colonial in its style, attractive and hospitable. Judge and Mrs. Sherman occupied their beautiful home until they rested from their labors, when it passed by their devise into possession of the church to which they were devotedly attached.

The homestead contains between eight and nine acres of land—a generous and valuable domain. Several shares of bank stock were also given in trust, the dividends to be used for the repairing of the mansion and the care of the property.

The private library of Judge and Mrs. Sherman was likewise bequeathed to the church for the use of the minister. This interesting collection of books is now placed behind glass cases in the old study. There are numerous first editions, presentation copies sent by the authors to Judge Sherman, and other standard, classical works.

"The portraits of my late husband and myself," the words are quoted from the will of Mrs. Sherman—"made by Nathaniel Jocelyn shall not be sold but remain in the house where they now are." These two fine, noteworthy pictures adorn the wall of the east drawing-room, imparting tone and character to the mansion, and diffusing a spirit of benediction.

In the year 1904 the ladies of the congregation raised and expended for repairs upon the Sherman Parsonage nearly seven thousand dollars, making such changes as would help to preserve the mansion and render it thoroughly comfortable.

The first Meeting-House was a small, rude building made of logs and rough hewn timbers, probably erected in 1640. Town meetings as well as church services were held in it. The second Meeting-House was built in 1765—a larger and more comfortable structure—a frame building forty feet square clap-boarded, and a tower in the center of the roof. The third Meeting-House was reared in the year 1745—sixty feet in length, forty-four feet in breadth, twenty-six feet in height, with a spire one hundred and twenty feet. The Rev. Andrew Eliot called it an "elegant Meeting-House." The fourth Meeting-House was modeled after the one destroyed in 1779. The congregation worshipped in it for the first time March 26th, 1786, but it was forty-two years before it was properly finished—a fact which suggests the slow recovery of the people from the losses of the American Revolution. A part of the funds came from the town and the confiscated property of traitors and a part from the subscriptions of the people. The Meeting-House erected in 1849 was the first one that came as the result of voluntary offerings.

More than eight thousand dollars was raised for this Romanesque structure. The length of it was ninety-five feet and its breadth forty-seven. The spire extended to the height of one hundred and thirty feet. The seating capacity of this handsome Meeting-House was five hundred and fifty persons. The later changes adapted the structure to the needs of the day—a chapel being added during the pastorate of Dr. McLean and the church parlors when Dr. Bushnell was pastor.

The chaste,, beautiful Sanctuary which crowns the slight elevation made sacred by five previous edifices may properly be named a loving gift from the people. When the former house was burned in 1890 the committee having in charge the raising of funds prepared a Greeting, printed in old English, on heavy paper, fittingly adorned, reading as follows :

“The Prime Ancient Society

sendeth greeting to all the loyal men and women, at home and abroad, who revere and hold in hallowed remembrance this First Church of Christ.

Our Sanctuary was destroyed by fire on the morning of May thirtieth, nineteen hundred and ninety.

If the Society would be faithful to past history, it must not only rebuild the Sanctuary, but it must give evidence of a purpose to go forward with more earnestness and devotion in the work committed to it by the Master.

To all those who have ever worshipped in our Sanctuary, and to all those who are connected with its past or present by ties of joy or sorrow, the Society believes it to be a duty and esteems it a privilege to extend an invitation to join in perpetuating this centre of Christian influence.

The Prime Ancient Society therefore sends you greeting and extends to you a cordial invitation to co-operate in erecting to the Glory of God a Church edifice where may be continued and enlarged that devout Spirit of Service to the Master which has marked its history.”

Never did task of raising funds bring keener, sweeter joy to minister's heart. The greetings were given to "the loyal men and women," kindling in them many tender emotions. What a privilege and pleasure to share in such pious task? What an opportunity to say in vocal stone—"I pay happy tribute to the memory of venerated sires?"

There was no solicitation—no subscription papers—simply this privilege extended—a high and holy privilege—extended with glad assurance that "loyal men and women" would appreciate its precious and profound significance. Gifts came with hearty words of encouragement and fidelity—one dollar, ten dollars, three hundred, five hundred, a thousand, two thousand, three thousand, ten thousand—the mites of children, the abundance of the rich, the savings of the rugged toiler. "Take this," said our blind, cheerful, beloved war veteran, putting his roll of bills into the treasury—money carefully held against a "rainy day." The names of this "loyal legion" went down in the book—were there not almost three hundred of them? And the book is hidden in the corner-stone.

"If more is needed tell me and I will do my share," said more than one. "I will double my subscription if you think best" said others. "Is that enough or shall I add another figure?" Such words accompanied the gifts. And there were special gifts—a brass lectern bestowed by the young ladies—a communion table from the Young People's Society—the furnishings of the edifice by the ladies of the parish—the massive marble pillar in the choir given by the children of Mr. and Mrs. O. B. Jennings—the bell and organ by Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan in memory of his deceased wife Amelia Sturges—the lovely, granite coping, a fine, true "finishing touch" given by the Chairman of the Building Committee. The prosaic labor of raising funds and adorning the Sanctuary became shotted through and through with these golden threads of happy, eager generosity.

Here let us record the names appended to the Greeting which met with such gracious and liberal response :

Oliver B. Jennings	Samuel Morehouse
Frederick Sturges	Amory E. Rowland
Oliver Turney	Edward Osborn
Albert Turney	Benjamin Betts
Edward Sturges	John L. Morehouse
Henry C. Sturges	Frank S. Child
Stephen Morehouse	Andrew P. Wakeman

Mr. Frederick Sturges was made Chairman of the Building Committee—the firm of J. C. Cady & Co. prepared the plans and the contract for the work was given to A. W. Burritt.

The dedication of the building occurred on May 2nd 1892—a memorable service in which the pastor was assisted by the three living ex-pastors of the church, Dr. McLean, Dr. Burroughs and Dr. Bushnell, and the Fairfield West Consociation, and a great concourse of people.

Several recent legacies have increased the invested funds of the Society. The sum of seven hundred dollars from the estate of Sereno Wilson became available in 1899. Mr. Burr Osborn left a fund of five hundred dollars to the Society in 1893—for the benefit of Hope Chapel. Miss Frances Burr added her name to this roster in the year 1901, by a gift to the maintenance fund of the church. A sum of money was given into the keeping of the Society, by a friend in 1908 as a memorial of Miss Ella Sturges. The interest of this fund is used for the benefit of the Sunday School children at the annual Christmas festival. Several small sums of money are held in trust by the Ecclesiastical Society for special purposes—these gifts representing interest in various organizations and activities connected with the church.

A fund whose income shall be devoted to the proper maintenance and perpetuation of the church property has been started and has already assumed fair proportions.

Mr. J. Sanford Saltus gave the church a fund in 1904, as a memorial of his mother, a great grand-daughter of the Rev. Andrew Eliot, D. D. Another gift was bestowed by Mr. Saltus in 1906 in remembrance of his wife Medora Hubbell, who was a descendant of an old Fairfield family.

The bronze tablet which adorns and dignifies the vestibule of the church contains the names of the ministers who have served this parish during the two hundred and seventy years of its existence. This was the gift of Miss Jennings and was unveiled on Sunday, October 21st, 1906.

The jewel glass windows at the rear of the pulpit were given in memory of Mr. Oliver B., and Mrs. Esther J. Jennings, by their children—Mr. Walter Jennings, Miss Annie B. Jennings, Mrs. Walter B. James, Mrs. Hugh D. Auchincloss and Mr. Oliver G. Jennings.

The jewel glass window on the west side of the church commemorates the services of Rev. Andrew Eliot A. M., the fifth minister of this parish. The color scheme of this window, wrought out with rare delicacy and suggestiveness, uses bright tints and fine shadings, contrasting agreeably with the rich, subdued effects of light sifting through the jewel glass at the north end of the edifice. Mr. J. Sanford Saltus is the giver of the memorial in honor of the revered Parson Eliot.

These windows are works of art—the brilliant creations of genius—unsurpassed in their fine detail, tender beauty and spiritual elevation.

They are representative examples of mediæval glass work, the medallioned windows of the 12th and 13th centuries, the golden age of the early glaziers. Some of the most notable works of this type are still in Bourges, Chartres and other Cathedrals of Continental Europe and England.

The primal motive of design of that period was the division of the entire field of the light opening into panels or medallions of circular, oval, square or other geometrical form, run-

ning vertically through the windows. In one window, there would be a series of alternating large and small medallions, the larger ones being used for figure groups, illustrating scenes from the Old or New Testament, the smaller carrying symbolic ornaments, or designs of the character of the architecture of the edifice. The figure medallions might illustrate the lives of the prophets or saints, or different periods in the life of the Saviour, the scenes of His nativity and childhood, early manhood, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

A medallion window was often a comprehensive recital of some portion of the old or new law, and taught in entirety a Biblical lesson. Of all forms of windows, they were the most forceful examples of scriptural teaching through pictorial illustration. The early medallion windows were constructed on mosaic lines, and following the method of all mediæval windows, the light and shade, gradation of color, and detail of general design and ornament were effected by painting on the surface of the glass. This was necessary by reason of the limitation of the material, the glass of the time being only in solid bodies of even color.

The modern medallion window is constructed on mosaic principles, and the motive of design follows the lines of the earlier period, but by reason of a material of higher development better results have been obtained. The glass of the present time with its limitless range of gradation of color and tone, and its depth of brilliancy, presents possibilities for greater work in this type of windows. In the modern medallion window, there are embodied the ideas of the mediæval school, but with stronger design and detail, and by the elimination of surface paints and pigments in the structural body, and the consequent retention of the inherent qualities of the glass, a richer effect is secured.

The windows at the rear of the pulpit consist of three panels divided into series of large and small medallions. There are nine large medallions containing three series of scenes in the

life of Christ. The three upper medallions refer to Childhood and Illustrate "The Blessing of Little Children," (St. Luke 18-16,) "The Nativity," (St. Luke 2-8,) "The Child in the Kingdom." (St. Mark 9-36.)

The central medallions represent Personal Incidents in the life of Christ; "The Baptism by John," (St. Matthew 3-16,) "The Disputation in the Temple," (St. Luke 2-46,) "The Transfiguration." (St. Matthew 17-1.) The three lower medallions refer to the Lord's Ministry and His work among men and women. The subjects are "The Woman of Samaria," (St. John 4-4,) "The Sermon on the Mount," (St. Matthew 5-1,) "Healing the Blind." (St. Matthew 9-27.)

The Eliot window contains two medallions. The palms which are massed in the higher division of the panel typify a victorious life—the livid green an emblem of youth's freshness and vigor, the purplish halo an emblem of serene old age. The tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of nations, whose fruits are manifold and ever ripening, is set in the lower medallion. It suggests that mystic realm into which spirits triumphant enter, blessed with the felicities of a glorious immortality.

The medallions in each of the windows carry symbolic ornaments which are joined by interlacing bands in harmony with the work. Shining jewels with the radiant curves and squares and circles are woven into a brilliant setting, prophetic of the joys and glories which encompass the life which is hid with Christ in God.

The ladies of the Gould Homestead in 1909 increased the maintenance fund of the church by a memorial gift.

This bequest, which marks the final departure of this family—the virtual extinction of the Fairfield line bearing the ancient name—commemorates distinguished services both in church and state, of eminent ancestors. Major Nathan Gold, Lieut-Governor and Chief Justice Gold, Col. Abraham Gold,

Hon. John Gould, representative, senator, commissioner, marshal—these strong and faithful men all gave the testimony of a good conscience and an exalted purpose in life.

These patriotic, christian women also bequeathed legacies to St. Paul's Church in Fairfield, and the Memorial Library. They also remembered generously the Fairfield Historical Society and the Bridgeport Hospital. But their chief benefaction was a gift of the homestead and residuary estate for the purpose of founding and maintaining the Gould Vacation Home for Self-Supporting Women, an institution designed to foster the health and contribute to the happiness of this large and important company of workers.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MINISTERS AND THEIR CO-WORKERS.

IT is a remarkable succession of men who have been associated together officially in the life of this parish.

The pastors of our church have been educated men, favored with the discipline and culture imparted by college and university. John Jones, the first minister of the parish, was a graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge; a gentleman of refinement, the friend of Governor Winthrop. Samuel Wakeman may properly be called a Harvard man, although obstacles prevented his graduation. Joseph Webb matriculated at Harvard. During his second year, when only sixteen years old, the faculty disciplined him for certain abuses which he put upon the freshmen, which event imperiled the completion of his course. An apology on his part, however, enabled him to right himself with his instructors so that he received his diploma with the other members of his class. It was simply a case of youthful, aggressive, mischievous conduct, revealing a very lively disposition and a willingness to take his share of fun. Noah Hobart and Andrew Eliot also received their degrees at Harvard, standing well in their work. Heman Humphrey, Nathaniel Hewit, Lyman H. Atwater, Edward E. Rankin, and John E. Bushnell studied at Yale. John Hunter was a Union man, standing high among his mates. Willis Lord received his degree from the hand of President Mark Hopkins of Williams. Alexander McLean spent his happy academic days on the beautifully wooded hillside crowned by Hamilton College. George S. Burroughs honored Princeton as his Alma Mater. It is a significant fact that the men who have served this parish with fidelity and distinction based their labors upon the solid foundations of the most thorough preparation.

These men evinced a high grade of scholarship, so that in their pulpit ministrations and their personal contributions to the life of the times they made profound impression. Public education was the special contention of these men. They had large part in directing local school affairs, the town or village school being their particular charge. Frequently have the pastors of this church taken active share in giving instruction to the children of the parish. Mr. Webb joined with the far-sighted band of brother ministers in Connecticut to found Yale College, bestowing a portion of his library upon the infant institution. For many years he was an efficient and enthusiastic member of the Yale corporation, seeking in various ways to promote the interests of the college. Andrew Eliot had been an instructor in Harvard College for ten years before he accepted the pastorate of our church. Heman Humphrey was a scholar of such force and learning that Amherst College made him president. His career as educator has become a portion of educational history in New England.

Dr. Hewit was one of the founders and a frequent benefactor of Hartford Theological Seminary. Lyman H. Atwater accepted a call to the chair of philosophy in Princeton, after nineteen years of earnest, fruitful ministry in this parish. And such was the confidence reposed in him that he filled the vacant chair of the presidency until a successor relieved him of those onerous duties. Willis Lord's scholarship won him wide fame, so that he served successively as professor of Biblical literature in Lane Theological Seminary, professor of ecclesiastical and Biblical history in Chicago Theological Seminary, and president of Wooster University, Ohio. George S. Burroughs showed extraordinary proficiency in linguistic studies. He taught Biblical literature in Amherst College for several years, managed the affairs of Wabash College, Indiana, as president, during a critical period, and gave his last days to most congenial tasks in Oberlin, as professor of Hebrew and cognate languages.

In addition to such services as we have named, other pastors of this church have been widely useful and generously active as trustees and helpers in numerous institutions of learning.

The literary services of the men are worth our review. A cultivated, studious minister of the Gospel in New England takes naturally to this form of intellectual exercise. The conspicuous book-makers were for many generations found among the clergy while the great names of our literature show traces of the inspiration dating back to the minister's family as a fountain head of life.

Sermon work constituted an important part of this early literature. The graphic, quaint, forcible style shown by Mr. Wakeman in his famous election sermon well illustrates the standard of composition. Two little books, written by Noah Hobart during the heated controversy between champions of the Congregational and the Episcopal faith, excited considerable interest in New England. We preserve them as characteristic exponents of the times. Dr. Dwight pays high tribute to Mr. Hobart, observing that his writings "display a degree of skill and acumen that mark their author as one of the leading spirits of his time." His successor, Andrew Eliot, was a member of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the Massachusetts Historical Society, contributing to both associations as occasion arose. Several of his letters, now in the possession of the latter society, give vivid and striking descriptions of life through the period of the American Revolution. Mr. Eliot's library was a notable collection of standard works. At the burning of the town, it became part of the sacrifice to liberty; but Dr. Howard of Boston, touched with profound sympathy for Mr. Eliot in this great loss, preached upon the subject in the New North Church, and sent the young brother a contribution toward a new purchase of books.

Dr. Humphrey became a frequent writer for the press. Several of his books attained wide circulation. He published "Es-

says on the Sabbath," "Tour in France, Great Britain and Belgium," "Domestic Education," "Letters to a Son in the Ministry," "Life and Writings of Professor Fiske," "Life of Thomas H. Gallaudet," and "Sketches and History of Revivals."

Dr. Atwater was for years the editor of the Princeton Review, a writer upon philosophical and religious themes, and the author of a work on logic. Dr. Lord's book on "Christian Theology for the People," was only one of numerous writings given to the public through a long literary career. The names of varied contributions to the literature of the day on the part of these and other ministers in this church would make a formidable array of subjects.

The ministers of the parish have been true to their heritage of leadership, and forged to the front in their public services. The history of religion in the colony and state shows that Fairfield pastors shared not inconspicuously in affairs. It might be the preaching of election sermons, participating in the deliberations of important committees, having a hand in the building of the Cambridge platform, or presiding over the annual meeting of the State Association.

The three great names in temperance reform, during the early years of the nineteenth century, were Beecher, Humphrey, and Hewit. But the chief credit belongs to Dr. Humphrey of drawing up that remarkable report on intemperance presented to the Fairfield Association of Ministers in 1813—a paper which is not only said to be the first temperance tract published in this country, but also one of the most influential. Dr. Humphrey's six sermons on the subject gave him a national reputation. The work which Dr. Hewit did in behalf of temperance made him a commanding figure in this country and in England. His splendid Websterian eloquence became one of the marked forces in the mighty campaign against this foe of society. "I have often listened to flights of eloquence from Dr. Hewit," said Judge

Sherman, "that I have never heard equalled by mortal man." This tremendous force and enginery was consecrated to the great reform movement. When Dr. Hewit was made secretary of the Boston Temperance Society, although the ties which bound him to this parish were strong, he felt constrained to assume the work which offered such vast opportunities for the exercise of his peculiar, masterful gifts.

Another minister of our church served in a secretarial office. Dr. McLean became secretary of the American Bible Society in 1878, and devoted himself to this sphere of Christian influence for the last twenty-four years of his life.

The head of a college or university is chiefly an executive servant. The fact that three pastors here have attained the presidency of a college or university, and that others have been invited to similar places of usefulness emphasizes the spirit of noteworthy leadership.

The patriotism of the men whose names appear upon the tablet is a most delightful memory. John Jones had been an ordained priest in the Church of England, but for conscience' sake he went forth to seek a new country. It tested one's worth and faith—this exile and self-sacrifice—but he proved himself a man loyal to the high ideal, and wrought zealously, undeviatingly for the good of this new country.

His successors no less appreciated their independency. It was stalwart Christian patriotism which rang through the election sermons preached by these ministers, the pulpit being a perennial spring of the loftiest sentiments and the noblest impulses which concerned the good of the state. Never did any indifferent or disloyal words fall from the lips of these far-sighted, optimistic preachers. The same spirit which prompted Mr. Eliot to encourage his people unto the largest sacrifices and the bravest services fired his predecessors and his successors in their eloquent inculcation of the love of country. For two years, during the American Revolution, Mr. Eliot relinquished his salary.

"I have been with you in prosperity," he said, "I will stay with you in your adversity." There are those living who recall the stand taken by Dr. McLean at the time our Civil War waged. Loyal to the heart's core, he uttered no uncertain counsels, pressing with all urgency the claims of country, counting popularity and friendship as things of little importance when set over against the call to preserve the integrity of the nation.

But in following the life narrative of these men, that which makes the profoundest impression upon the observer is their noteworthy and exalted character. The first five ministers enjoyed a life pastorate, wearing the harness to the day of final triumph, the average period of service here being over thirty-one years, the Nestor among them Noah Hobart, who ministered in the parish during four full decades.

Such remarkable service speaks volumes, not only in praise of these pastors but likewise in praise of their people. Relations of a most tender and beautiful character blessed the generations measured by this period. The shorter pastorates of the later years are explained by the fact that Fairfield had become a small community in comparison with the growing cities of our land, so that when men of uniformly high caliber and rich promise spent their early years of faithful, happy labor in the parish, they were invariably called to the larger and more important fields.

As we read the names inscribed upon the chaste bronze page of history, which graces the entrance to our sanctuary, we will pause and gaze with quickened interest upon the portraits vividly distinct to the mind's eye.

The Rev. John Jones, Puritan divine of the Church of England, independent minister in a non-conforming church of New England, scholar in exile, gentleman, uncomplaining sufferer, self-denying friend, a founder of the new order of things, fearless, ingenious, workful, true to the faith dominating his rugged

spirit. His portrait shows him in gown and bands, the conventional garb of the Puritan divine in his pulpit.

The Rev. Samuel Wakeman, first ministerial product of the western soil to minister unto this people in the land of his nativity, lover of books (his library was appraised at £54, 50s, 6d, a large sum for early days in New England), diligent student, aggressive preacher, robust and prosperous farmer, community counsellor, man of property (his estate amounted to nearly a thousand pounds), and widely influential in public affairs, an honored father in Israel, transmitting to numerous descendants the precious heritage of the righteous.

The Rev. Joseph Webb, a merry, exuberant son of Harvard toned down by several years of arduous and varied labors to a calm, observant, sympathetic workman, lines of deep thought and noble purpose traceable in his face, strength and zeal characteristic of the man; "hospitable in his house," writes his biographer, "steady in his friendships, free and facetious in his conversation" (many of these worthies shone in bright and humorous talk); "a gentleman of probity and piety," says another eulogist, "of distinguished erudition in grammar, rhetoric logic, and theology, appearing most free of affectation." The inventory of his estate tells us what manner of clothes were worn by Mr. Webb, namely: shoes with silver buckles, homespun worsted stockings, knee breeches of plush with silver buttons, "a good shirt," a calamanco vest, black broadcloth coat (apprized at six pounds), a great coat of broadcloth, a wig, a silk handkerchief, a wide-brimmed soft hat, a pair of spectacles, and white gloves.

The Rev. Noah Hobart, a man of vigorous body and intellect—tireless, efficient through forty years ministry—"laborious student," acute and learned—adorning "the doctrine which he professed by an exemplary life"—I quote the first President Dwight, his intimate friend—a born ecclesiastic and controversialist—revered in all the colony as a conservative and eminent

leader—the champion of orthodoxy, Presbyterian ordination and the Established Church of Connecticut—a servant who lived out his full span of life in rich enjoyment of work—preaching his two sermons “with more than his accustomed animation” the very last Sabbath of life—conversing with freedom and composure in the hour of translation itself.

The Rev. Andrew Eliot, worthy son of a distinguished father, lover of books and the midnight oil, a genial and attractive personality, making strong attachments and binding men to himself by enduring ties, a judicious and affectionate pastor, “unentangled with the things of this life,” candid and simple in his piety, brave and wise in spirit, urbane and happy in manners, as one of his biographers writes, he “conciliated the esteem of all ranks.”

The Rev. Heman Humphrey D. D., L. L. D., ardent workman, profound thinker, guide of young men, passionate reformer, his great heart beating in sweet accord with his active brain—a many-sided helper, practical, imaginative, spiritual, progressive—touching life with quickening energy in variety of ways—illustrating by word and deed, book and character the exalted principles which dominated him through an eventful career. It is a face of gracious refinement and splendid, abounding manliness which looks down upon us from the canvas.

The Rev. Nathaniel Hewit, a rugged, forceful representative of the early Puritan leaders—Carlyle-like in the massiveness and frank insistence of his awakening individuality—the rich, deep, eloquent speech flowing with majestic sweep like some river, the revelation of rare mastership in assemblies—stern advocate of righteousness, true defender of the faith, magnetic yet playful, imperious but prayerful—combining the active and the passive virtues, a wondrous blending of paradoxical forces. The streams of subtle influence continue their rich fertilization and the end is not yet.

The Rev. John Hunter, admired and beloved friend of Judge

Sherman—his name suggestive of the sport particularly dear to him, tramping through field and forest in eager pursuit of game, to the annoyance of staid, old-fashioned people—a devotee of books and nature, well versed in both realms—frank and enthusiastic—a keen wit sparing neither friend nor foe, his shafts not seldom fired while standing in the pulpit, the aim sure and the effect startling—a man of imagination and writer of verses, impulsive, eccentric, courageous, his very excess of spirits pushing him to such extremes that depressing reaction often ensued with attendant suffering.

The Rev. Lyman H. Atwater, D. D., L.L.D., a man whose massive frame seemed the fitting vehicle of his great mind and generous spirit—weight, solidity, resource, power, words interpretative of the person—a cultivated and learned teacher, a strong Biblical preacher, a citizen whose judgment and courtesy proved to be large elements in shaping village life. Blessed with keen sense of humor and good common sense; straightforward and outspoken, he never made an enemy, his sterling Christian manliness working for the perpetual improvement and uplift of parish and society.

The Rev. Willis Lord, D.D., L.L.D., a minister with student caste of countenance and tell-tale expression of absorbing meditation, eloquent and profound in speech, sympathetic, ambitious, a laborer whose physical strength did not equal the tasks which pressed themselves upon his consideration, industrious and energetic, heedful when called to sacrifice self, a servant seeking ever rightly to divide the word of life and incorporate the truth into his own vital manhood.

The Rev. Alexander McLean, a buoyant, tireless worker—abounding in the good cheer of the gospel—witty, social, and popular with a bent toward practical affairs and a mind quick to adapt itself to fresh conditions—orthodox to the backbone with early Scotch orthodoxy—a genial companion, loyal citizen, happy sportsman, generous friend—he loved merriment, children and

righteousness, and he proved himself ever the champion of justice, progress, and the nobler manhood.

The Rev. Edward E. Rankin, D.D., a gentleman of the old school—dignified, affable, invariably courteous, the soul of honor—methodical in all his labor, accurate in scholarship, a wise and faithful leader, studious of his people's needs, and abundant in his service among them. His stately presence and free-spent life imparted tone to the community, distributing like leaven, precious, vital influences.

The Rev. George S. Burroughs, D.D., L.L.D., a son of the manse, inheritor of lofty impulses, ever breathing the atmosphere of great ideals—slender in body but stalwart in mind—incarnation of true purpose and glad hope—beloved of children, chosen, happy companion of men, sympathetic helper of young or old, whether rich or poor—what a flow of life gushed forth into various channels of noteworthy well-doing; what a narrative of large plans, brave wise words, and splendid self-denying labors is told in his life.

The Rev. John E. Bushnell, D.D., eloquent preacher, loyal pastor, whose abundant and fruitful ministry continues in his great western parish—shall a successor here attempt the characterization of the man who labors unweariedly to-day in the rich plenitude of his powers? Dr. Bushnell abides in the affectionate remembrance of this people, his earnest labors as a workman fresh and joyous from the school of the prophets held in dear and tenacious memory. Long may he contribute to the Church of Christ strength, devotion, leadership!

Is it not a praiseworthy and remarkable succession of ministers for a country parish—for any parish? Does it not provoke a certain flush of honorable pride that such men have served this ancient, prosperous Zion?

The records of the first half century in the history of the church were lost many years ago so that the register of laymen who served in an official capacity is incomplete. It begins with

Goodman John Thompson, who was elected deacon in 16—. This first named servant represented the church in the Stratfield Council which adopted the Fairfield Interpretation of the Saybrook Platform in 1709. The chronicle of deacons with the dates when chosen to the office is as follows :

John Thompson,	16—.
Lothrop Lewis,	1729.
Moses Dimon,	1733.
David Rowland,	1747.
Nathan Bulkly,	1768.
Gold Selleck Silliman,	(exact date of election unrecorded.)
David Judson,	1787.
Daniel Osborn,	1790.
Moses Jennings,	1804.
Elijah Bibbins,	1810.
Roger M. Sherman,	1810.
William Morehouse,	1823.
Charles Bennett,	1833.
Samuel A. Nichols,	1840.
J. Madison Morehouse,	1854.
Henry S. Curtiss,	1864.
Oliver B. Jennings,	1871.
Joseph Lockwood,	1871.
Samuel Morehouse,	1880.
John B. Morehouse,	1885.
Andrew P. Wakeman,	1889.
Edward Osborn,	1891.
Francis H. Brewer,	1893.
J. Elting Deyo,	1903.
Will O. Burr,	1908.

These names represent pioneer families, cherished traditions, consecration, the loyalty, affection and generous service of sturdy New England stock.

CHAPTER XVIII.

METHODS OF SERVICE.

VARIOUS methods of christian activity have been put in operation during the period covered by the history of our church. But the last century was prolific in important changes. We have spoken of the various forms taken by the church in its management of parish affairs—the distinction between the Standing Committee of the church and that of the parish—the broadening scope of the former and the narrowing scope of the latter. The Sunday School soon became an important factor and gradually there has been passed over to it the instruction of children and youth, a task which through the early years was shared by the pastor and parents in certain catachetical exercises.

The office of superintendent has been filled these later years successively by Deacon J. Madison Morehouse, Benjamin Betts, Samuel Morehouse, Dr. W. H. Donaldson, John L. Morehouse, Will O. Burr, Bacon Wakeman and J. Elting Deyo.

Another organization which assumed helpful service here was the Charitable Society.

The ladies of Fairfield, including Black Rock, on the first Thursday of June, 1815, met at the residence of Mrs. David Hull to organize a society to be called "The Fairfield Charitable Society," the object of which as mentioned in Rule 1st, "Shall be, to afford to the poor, relief in any way that their situation may require. If any of the managers absent themselves unnecessarily more than one hour after the time appointed for meeting, they must pay to the treasurer six cents."

This Society flourished for well nigh a century. The funds were recently given into the keeping of the Standing Committee of the church.

Another Society which had large influence in the parish was that organized for the purpose of stated prayer among the ladies.

The Female Prayer Meeting Society was formed at the house of Rev. Nathaniel Hewit, the first Saturday evening in March, 1821. Members present at that time were :

Mrs. Sarah Allen,	Miss Eliza Knapp,
Mrs. Elizabeth Burr,	Mrs. Wilsana Nichols,
Mrs. Sarah Hewit,	Miss Sally Patchin,
Miss Mary Hobart,	Mrs. Esther White,
Miss Hannah Hobart,	Miss Lucinda Allen,
Mrs. Rebecca Hewit,	Miss Lydia Chatterton,
Mrs. Anna Jennings,	Miss Susan Eliot,
Mrs. Mary Joy,	Miss Sarah White,
Mrs. Cynthia Knapp.	

The regulations observed by the Society were as follows :

ARTICLE 1st. No persons shall be admitted members of this Society unless they will pray in their turn.

2d. No remarks ever to be made with regard to the performance of any member while present, or after they return home.

3d. No person shall be invited in occasionally, unless they will close the meeting with prayer.

4th. No reading but the Scriptures shall be admitted.

It is interesting to note the names of the ladies concerned in this movement.

Mrs. Elizabeth Allen	Mrs. Harriet Hoyt
“ Sarah Allen	“ Mary Meeker
“ Ann Atwood	“ Wilsana Nichols
Miss Lucinda Allen	“ Rutha Nash
“ Maria Allen	Miss Eliza Knapp
Mrs. Elizabeth Burr	“ Mary Ann Knox
“ Eliza Burr	Mrs. Lucia Lee

Mrs. Abigail Belden		“ Caroline Dodge
“ Polly Bennett		Miss Emily Mallory
“ Ellen Bennett		“ Sarah Ann Mallory
Miss Sarah Bulkley		“ M. A. Leavenworth
“ Lydia Chatterton		“ Sally Patchen
“ Susan Eliot		“ Lucy Smith
Mrs. Sarah Hewit		“ Mary Ann Squire
“ Rebecca Hewit		“ Priscilla Sturges
“ Susan Hull		Mrs. Esther White
Miss Mary Hobart		Miss Sarah White
“ Hannah Hobart		Mrs. Martha Trubee
“ Eliza Hull		“ Elizabeth Trubee
Miss A. T. Allen		Miss Eunice Turney
Mrs. Anne Jennings		“ Janette Hayes
“ Mary Joy	Colored. {	“ Catherine Smedley
Miss Lois Jennings		“ Nancy Smedley
“ Eliza Jennings		“ Dinah Maltbee
Mrs. Cynthia Knapp		“ Catherine Hunter
Miss Susan Osborne	Mrs. Mary L. Skinner	
“ Phebe Osborne	“ Abby Lewis	
Mrs. Julia Ann Hunter	“ Elizabeth Sturges	
“ Mary Dimon	“ E. H. Osborne	
“ Sarah Rowland	Miss Abby B. Nichols	
Miss Mary P. Joy	“ Anna P. Nichols	
“ Mary Mills	“ Jane A. Nichols	
“ Mary Ann Jennings	“ Mary S. Skinner	
“ Abby Dimon	“ Eliza D. Skinner	
Mrs. Susan Atwater	“ Harriet H. Burr	
“ Lydia Holbrooke	“ Eleanor B. Lyon	
Miss Esther G. Judson	“ Julia B. Nichols	
Mrs. Euretta Denison	Mrs. Caroline Knapp	

The Ladies Home Missionary Society has been an efficient aid in the growth and maintenance of the missionary spirit for more than two generations. Its well sustained meetings, gener-

ous financial assistance and tireless activity are matters of record. The missionary boxes sent to the frontier for a long succession of years have been remarkable for excellent character, making glad many a faithful servant, imparting fresh courage as well as liberally supplying instant needs.

Another society which has served helpful purposes these later years is the Fortnightly which meets stately for sewing in behalf of the poor. Contributions to various missionary objects have also been forth-coming from the members. The Fresh Air Association is under special obligations to the society for help in the making of garments and the preparation of the Home for the comfort of the children.

A later society is the Young Ladies Mission Circle meeting once in two weeks for nine months of the year and working for such charities as specially appeal to the young. This society has taken an active part in several festivals conducted for the purpose of raising funds in behalf of mission enterprises. Like the Fortnightly it has been especially interested in our Fresh Air work.

The Y. P. S. C. E. was organized in the spring of 1888 and has flourished during two decades, taking charge of the prayer meeting on Sunday evening and contributing generously to the social life of the church. It has sent flowers to various missions in New York, distributed good literature, given funds to assist several churches, schools, and other christian enterprises, and proved itself a useful agency in our parish.


An outcome of charitable impulse in the church and community is seen in the Fresh Air Home. The handsome, commodious building was erected in 1906 at an expense of nearly \$8,000—a gift largely contributed to the Association by Mrs. Oliver B. Jennings, Miss Jennings and Mr. Frederick Sturges. The support of the work has come through the free-will offerings of the friends in the neighborhood, bestowed without regard to sect or class. One hundred and twenty-five little girls—more or less—

have enjoyed each season a happy vacation in this beautiful town by the sea during the past eighteen years. The cost of maintaining the work has been from \$400 to \$600 a year, varying with the length of the season and the number of children entertained. Nearly two thousand guests from the missions of New York City have profited by this gracious charity.

The work at Hope chapel began as a Sunday School back in the seventies. People of the neighborhood joined with helpers from Fairfield and Greenfield in raising the funds and erecting the modest chapel which has served the community for a generation. The Sunday School gathered such a large company of young people that it was finally arranged to hold a preaching service regularly on Sunday evenings and a student from Yale Divinity School was engaged to supply the pulpit. This was in the early part of the eighties. A long succession of young preachers have ministered in the place—their time of service generally being the senior year of the divinity course. Dr. Rankin, Dr. Burroughs, Dr. Bushnell and the present pastor have also held frequent services in the chapel. For several years a mid-week meeting was conducted with excellent results. Many people from the chapel have united with the church, the tone of life in the community has been noticeably improved and a large number of christian workers have been privileged to contribute to the common welfare of the town and the real advance of the Kingdom.

Among the many workers we name the superintendents of the Sunday School: Deacon Donaldson of Greenfield Hill, John H. McAlpin, James Pratt, Will O. Burr, Morris W. Lyon, Charles L. Hill, W. Ralph Thomas and J. Elting Deyo. The names of the teachers would fill a page—devoted men and women who have climbed the hill through heat and cold, in sunshine and storm, during youth and age that they might teach children the way of life and inspire them to the highest ideals of manhood and womanhood.

Hope chapel has been a very fountain of moral and spiritual refreshment where hundreds have drunk the waters of life. Several of our people have remembered the work by gifts which help to perpetuate the beneficent service wrought through the years.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD RECORDS.

TURNING the pages of old records and deciphering antique chirography is akin to an actual touch of hands with former generations. The "sere and yellow leaf" into which the pages of these chronicles have passed gives the reader a curious sense of remoteness. He fingers them reverently, he gazes upon the cursive characters traced by old time worthies with a feeling that he really lives as a contemporary with them. This indefinable, sympathetic association makes vivid and strangely real the life which expresses itself by such simple agencies as quill and ink and paper and manifold straight lines and curved.

The prime adventurers in Fairfield did not leave many pieces of writing. Some portion of the early town records were destroyed; while the first records of the church—dating from 1639 to 1694—were altogether lost. The curious, irregular signature of Lieutenant Governor Roger Ludlow, the founder of the town and for a time the most conspicuous figure in the church, may be seen appended to his last will and testament. Whatever revelation of character is given by hand-writing must be sought, so far as these original settlers are concerned, in the few legal papers which are filed in the Town Hall or preserved at Hartford. Perhaps the freedom and individuality in spelling interests a reader quite as much as the varieties of penmanship—a state of independence which the modern stickler for conventionality might well envy.

Then we are to remember that paper was an expensive commodity and people made a very economic use of it. That commemorative sermon preached by Mr. Webb on the Sunday following Major Nathan Gold's death—in which by the way no

mention is directly made of the eminent and worshipful churchman—was written on diminutive sheets of paper in a chirography so minute that a magnifying glass is necessary to decipher it. It was read however by the preacher—albeit he must have held it so close to his eyes that his face was quite hidden from his congregation. But the manuscript had not been put to its final uses on the day of the eulogy. There were several blank pages at the beginning and the ending of the sermon. These precious spaces became a journal to which Mr. Webb committed various observations upon the weather and important events of the times. (The manuscript is now in the keeping of the Fairfield Historical Society.)

Some goodly portion of the early writing in the first volume of the Church Records was done by Mr. Webb. This agreeable gentleman was as delicate in his wit as he was in his penmanship. Some of the Boston brethren termed him at one time “a lively and ingenious youth”—this agreeable disposition getting him into trouble when a student at Harvard College and resulting in his temporary suspension from scholastic privileges. The exhibition of his merry spirit however simply expressed the ardent, happy nature of a strong and noble man.

A bright, facetious style of conversation made him exceedingly popular in the parish and the colony. Hospitable and generous, abounding in good cheer he made glad many hearts when engaged in the more serious tasks of life, communicating some portion of his hopefulness to various enterprises, imparting to his learning and culture an element of attraction not often observed in scholarship.

The old records first contain the names of those who “renewed the covenant.” In 1679 the Reforming Synod of New England recommended that there should be a “solemn and explicit Renewal of the Covenant” on the part of God’s people. Among the names in the year 1694 which head the list are Theophilus Hull, Sarah Jennings, John Wheeler, Samuel Lockwood,

Nathaniel Seymour and Samuel French. Many familiar names follow—Burr, Barlow, Bennit, Rowland, Sturges, Rumsey, Jesup, Bradley, Wakeman, Bulkley, Osborn, Morehouse, Perry, Lyon, Sherwood, Dimon, Gold and others. Then we turn to the register of those who “recognized their baptismal engagements,” the first date of which is July 1st, 1733.

The names of the baptized begin with the earlier date, Aug. 19, 1694. This record is voluminous. The persons baptized by Mr. Webb numbered 1492,—those by Mr. Hobart 908 and those by Mr. Eliot 926.

The beginning of the marriage records dates back to 1694.

The record of those admitted into full communion begins with Theophilus Hull and Mary Hull, Nov. 11th, 1694.

As we read the firm, vigorous handwriting of Rev. Noah Hobart we readily accept the verdict of the day concerning his unusual force and ability. The romance in this good man's life concerned his first love and his last marriage. When a student at Harvard he became enamored of a Plymouth maiden. Miss Austen has told the story in one of her novels. The course of true love did not run smoothly and the lovers parted. Twice were they married and twice bereaved of their consorts. Late in life they met again, revived old times and finally united their destinies.

The Sabbath preceding his death Mr. Hobart preached twice as usual, and “with more than his usual animation” remarks Dr. Timothy Dwight.

In their record of marriages Mr. Hobart and Mr. Eliot both append the letters “V. D. M.” to their signatures—Verbi Dei Minister—Minister of the Word of God.

These records sometimes put people into strange juxtaposition. Here is the marriage of Jack, negro servant of David Barlow and Mary, negro servant of Deacon Hill by Andrew Eliot V. D. M., followed by this interesting record :

Hancock and Quincy

1775

August 28th

The Hon. John Hancock Esqr. and Miss Dorothy Quincy—both of Boston—were married at Fairfield.

Pr. Andrew Eliot V. D. M.

The Church Register of these early days was kept by the pastor, a church clerk being a later convenience. But the records are meagre at the best and must be supplemented by the work of the town clerk.

When the people first met in the unfinished meeting-house March 26th, 1786, Mr. Eliot preached from the text Gen. xxviii, 17, last clause: "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." But the books show that it was many years before the house was plastered and painted.

A few historical notes concerning the burning of Fairfield, appear in the records set down by Mr. Eliot.

July 7th, 1779. "A part of the British army, consisting of Britons, Germans and American refugees, under command of Major General Tryon and Brigadier General Garth, landed in this town from a fleet commanded by Sir George Collier."

"In the evening and night of the same day great part of the buildings in the town plot were consumed by said troops."

"In the morning the meeting-house, together with the Church of England building, the court house, prison and almost all the principal buildings in the society were laid in ashes."

The brief lines roughly sketch the most tragic days in the history of church and society.

The musical abilities of the Gold family are commemorated by a vote taken May 29th, 1729. "At a church meeting in the old parish of Fairfield it was voted that the worshipfull Mr. John Gold should set and read the Psalm; and in case he was absent or indisposed that his brother Mr. Samuel Gold should do it."

Four years later Mr. Andrew Burr was elected to this pleasant and responsible office.

The year of the town's destruction, Mr. Eliot writes in the book that "at a Church meeting, Voted that Messrs. Deodate Silliman, Peter Hendrick, Samuel Sturges, David Allen, Peter Jennings, James Penfield, Israel Bibbins, Jeremiah Jennings and any others of the Church or Society who are skilled in psalmody, be desired to sit together in the gallery on the Lord's day and lead the congregation in that part of divine worship—they to agree among themselves as to the person who is to pitch the tune."

The pitch pipe, the tuning fork, the violin, the base viol, the harmonicon or melodeon, one after another, served their worthy purposes as aids to worship until a pipe organ was installed in the fifth Meeting-House and the mixed choir sang their elaborate anthems—Sunday night being practice time until the custom of "keeping" Saturday night was given up and the choir met on this latter night at private houses for their drill in music and their delightful social hour. Great occasions these for the sweet interchange of confidences among the young people and the long walks home in little companies, which rapidly disintegrated into congenial sets of two and two.

Interspersed through the records of the Society are the certificates of the individuals who propose to pay their taxes to other churches than the old parish church.

"William Squier of this Society lodged his certificate on the 26th day of March 1801 that he attended the Baptist meeting and meant to support the Gospel in that way."

"Samuel Beers Jr., lodged his certificate, that he no longer considers himself as a member of the Presbyterian Society, but shall for the future contribute for the support of the Episcopal profession." July 9th, 1808.

"John Wilson dissents and joins the Baptist Society, Dec. 25th, 1817."

Then we read the names of numerous tax payers who are elected to membership in the Ecclesiastical Society. This is termed "An Account of the Inrollment of Several persons into the first Ecclesiastical Society in Fairfield, Done by me Daniel Osborn Clerk of said Society."

"Barlow Sturges of this Society had his name inrolled into the first Ecclesiastical Society in Fairfield by virtue of his recognizing his Baptismal Covenant in our Church on the 1st, day of August, A. D. 1790."

Mr. Osborn writes a firm, vigorous, legible hand and his record is one easily read.

A good deal of time in Society's meetings was devoted to the schools of the town—the appointment of school committees—the discussion of school-house repairs and the general management of this important part of parish business.

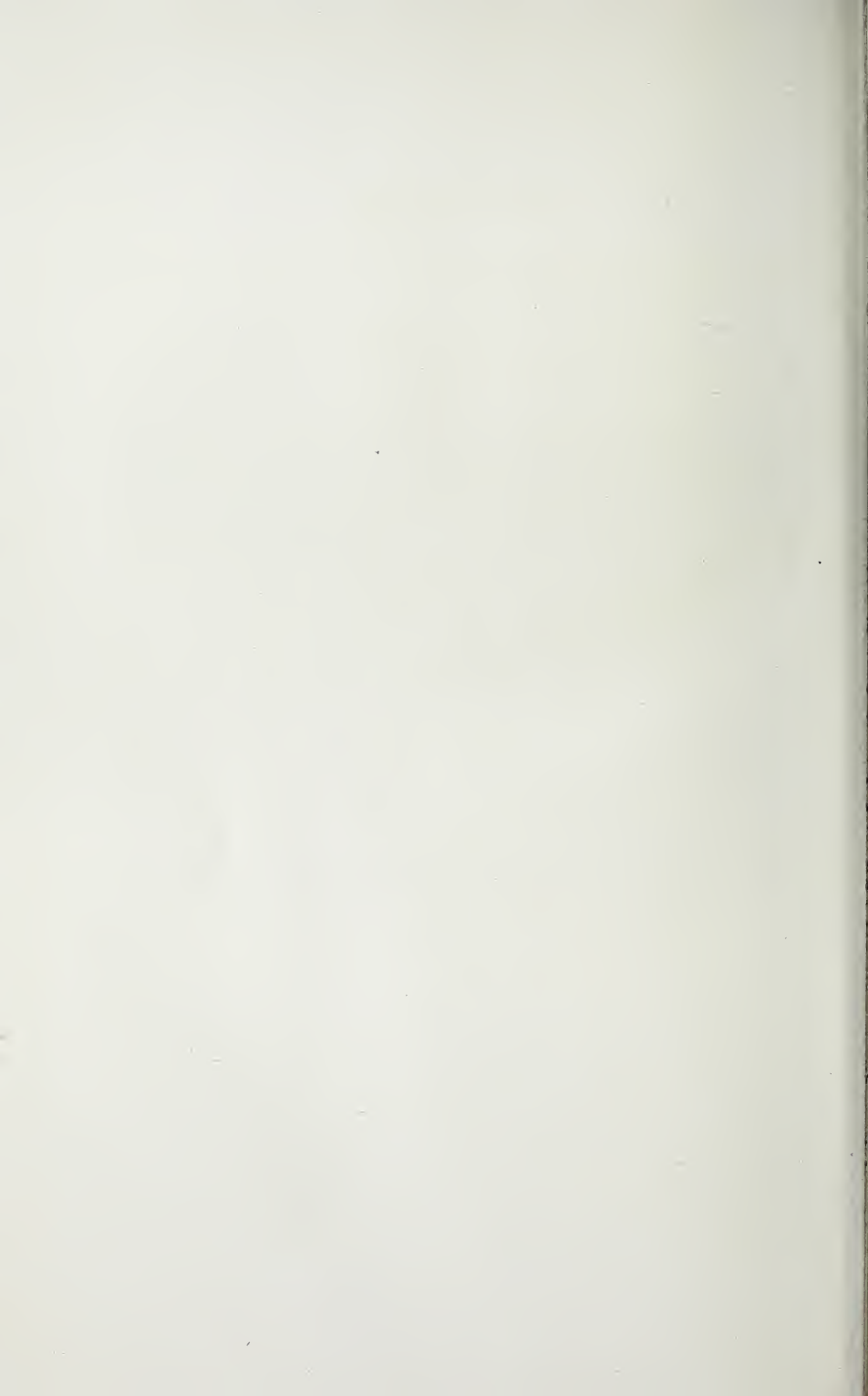
The Moderators of these meetings make a notable company. The Goulds and the Burrs are conspicuous. There was Judge Silliman and General Silliman, Captain Job Bartram and Judge Jonathan Sturges, Honorable Lothrop Lewis and the Rowlands, Col. Andrew Burr, Chief Justice Burr, High-Sheriff Thaddeus Burr and Gen. Burr, Col. James Smedley, Gen. Abel, Judge Roger M. Sherman and the later worthies.

Take the records as a whole (there are seven volumes in all) and they are written in admirable style. There are many pages which have the appearance of copper plate—so straight and regular are the lines, so bold, distinct and symmetrical every letter.

Samuel Rowland made an ideal clerk, a long apprenticeship in the town house training him into a most exact and painstaking writer. Nathan Beers Jr., in 1800 "keeps" the Society's book and sets down as the tax for expenses of said Society two cents on the dollar. The "letting of the pews" which had come into vogue with the new Meeting-House the latter part of the 18th century, brought in a sum which added to the general receipts so that the tax on the "Polls and ratable Estates of the Inhabi-



SHERMAN PARSONAGE



tants" was reduced in 1804 to one cent and five mills on the dollar." This fact is recorded in the beautiful penmanship of Mr. Beers.

When Judge Sherman was moderator of the Society and Walter Perry clerk in 1822 it was voted that a "Funeral Pall be purchased out of the pew money and that the Committee be directed to call on the Episcopal Society to join in the expense of one third of the cost."

"At a meeting of the First Presbyterian Society"—so runs the record through a succession of years—illustrating the largeness of liberty with which the Church and Society were designated. "The Prime Ancient Society," "The Prime Society," "The First Society," "The First Presbyterian Society," "The First Ecclesiastical Society" were names used interchangeably, various clerks apparently choosing the title which suited the fancy.

The last pages of the first record book belonging to the parish contains "An Account of ye Interest money Rec'd on ye School Bonds since ye 28th of March, 1758" and the "School money paid Out." John Allen, Thaddeus Burr and Jonathan Sturges, committee, attest the correctness of the account.

It is recorded by Walter Perry, December 31, 1822, that the Society's Committee "shall do as they thought proper whether to permit the Court to sit in the Meeting-House or not to try a capital crime." The reason of the Court's request is not given.

Deacon Samuel Nichols made a model clerk—the handwriting plain, dignified, prominent. Judge Hobart, elected U. S. Senator from New York (which office he declined), willed to the Fairfield church for the minister's use the works of Sir William Jones "as they were published by his widow, in which are included his Asiatic researches." So reads the testimony of Deacon Nichols, indicating the fact that a minister's library already flourished in the Prime Ancient Society. In fact another member of the Hobart family had enriched the parish with a gift

of books during the pastorate of the famous controversialist, the father of our New York Judge. The Hobart collection contained 98 volumes. The most important legacy of this kind came from Judge and Mrs. Sherman and to-day reposes behind glass cases in the Study of the parsonage, brass plates on the cases being properly inscribed with the words ; " Private Library of Judge Roger Minott Sherman—A Gift to the First Ecclesiastical Society of Fairfield—For the use of the Minister's Library." The catalogue of books names 426 titles and volumes.

Moses Betts was the clerk who had the pleasure of recording the names of the subscribers to the building fund in 1848. The amount of each subscription is named and the sum required for the erection of the new house being pledged, it was voted to proceed with the work. More than eight thousand dollars was expended at the time, and later improvements cost several thousand dollars additional.


The " Calls " and the " Letters of Acceptance " marking transitions in the pastorate are interesting although they have a characteristic sameness. One observes the uniform cordiality and reciprocation of christian sentiment and hopefulness.

The Rev. Andrew Eliot writes : " It affords me the greatest pleasure to reflect on the agreeable manner in which I was at first introduced among you. I acknowledge with gratitude the kind, obliging, generous treatment which I have received from the Society and from persons of other denominations—such treatment as has given me a favorable idea of the people of Fairfield."

When Rev. Heman Humphrey thirty-three years later succeeded Mr. Eliot, he wrote the Church and Society that " In the mean time I approach the altar with trembling ; and as I have but recently commenced preaching, as much study is requisite to obtain a thorough knowledge of the great doctrines of our holy religion, and as the various duties of the ministerial office are peculiarly arduous to the young and inexperienced, I hope you

will permit me for a year on to exchange the labors of the desk with my fathers and brethren in the ministry more frequently than is customary for those who have been long engaged in the great work." The proverbial kindness and goodwill of the people made easy the granting of such a reasonable petition.

Favored is the church whose records are so uniformly "well kept," with pages free from any intimation of defeat or discord ! The story of two hundred and seventy years becomes a revelation of steadfast faith and quiet growth in the things of the Kingdom.



CHAPTER XX.

A PASTORAL SURVEY.

YEARS ago Fairfield was a rare example of the high-class, conservative, quietly prosperous, ideal rural community. The business which had flourished in this centre until the British burned the town was largely given over to the neighboring, ambitious city of Bridgeport. When the Court ended its sessions here in 1853 and the village was no longer a county seat, an atmosphere of tranquility and reserve brooded above the place. The coming of the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroad through the town was a matter of profound interest for it brought the citizen into close relations with the metropolis ; but the essential character of the village remained. It was a residence town. Little business was transacted here. The man of means, the retired sea captain, the city merchant, the well-to-do farmer, the cultured gentleman of leisure made Fairfield the home place—a secluded and delightful realm where the daily flow of life was sweet, gracious, happy—altogether apart from the rush and tumult of the great world. The beautiful hills, the alluring patches of woodland, the companionable sea—great fields of wild flowers and bird haunted marshes all contributed to the charm, imparting a characteristic loveliness to the place.

But the dawn of another period was drawing on apace. Signs of approaching changes became manifest. There was a forward movement in behalf of better sanitary conditions. Large sums of money went into drainage. A fine civic spirit expressed itself in various helpful enterprises. The old burying ground had a substantial wall placed around it and the tombs of the ancestors were rebuilt.

The splendid beach which attracted larger and larger num-

bers of people induced some of the citizens to erect a convenient and commodious pavilion for bathing and social purposes. Then an impulse toward betterment revealed itself in macadam roads. At length the trolley road was built and frequent, rapid communication with near-by towns and cities became established. The bicycle and the automobile began to riot along the streets. Bridgeport pushed this way, not satisfied with absorbing a fair portion of the town and taking the Court from Fairfield, but evidently intent upon drawing into such close relations with the prime settlement that the entire territory would be practically one civic center. Growth could not be checked. The Memorial Library opened its generous portals. The State Audubon Society was organized here. Stores, halls, shops multiplied. A chaste, substantial stone fountain graced the triangle fronting the Library. Monuments appeared in different parts of the town commemorating men and events—the boulder on the Green, the lich-gate at the cemetery, placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution—the massive stone in Southport marking the ending of the Pequot War in 1637—the dignified granite shaft erected in the old burying hill to the memory of Andrew Ward. Independence Day was regularly observed on the Green. The Village Improvement Society entered upon its campaign. The Historical Society founded its library and museum and organized its far-reaching and important work. The historic sites in town were named and marked, public water flowed across Ash Creek from Bridgeport and served the citizens in their homes and places of business, a fire department sprang into being so that people had a larger feeling of security, the New Haven railroad changed its grade, and thereby eliminated peril of death at the crossings, the three miles of safe and lovely beach received a great influx of summer residents who dotted the sands with a host of cottages.

It has been the dawn of another period—a daybreak of activity. Recall the old time quiet with its easy flow of restricted

village life and contrast it with the new time movement, streets often thronged with swift moving machines, trolley cars filled until they imperil the traveller, clang of bells, tooting of horns, kaleidoscopic changes—all the signs of a vigorous suburban life and an identity of interests with the city which seems bound to absorb the territory of Fairfield.

These social and industrial changes have necessarily affected the status of the Prime Ancient Society.

It is impressed upon the mind to-day that a church with its numerous organizations—its many functions—and its varied interests makes a large demand upon men for its successful administration. Our Theological Schools are teaching their students that administration is a factor which must not be neglected. Infinite are the details which make the aggregate of church life. Here is a handful of trivial incidents in illustration. When the Meeting-House burned, the old bell became five hundred bells diffusing their musical notes all through our homes. In the vestry of the Sixth Sanctuary, the portraits of former pastors have been placed. For many years Children's Day in June marked the turning of the season. Bibles are given to the children of the congregation who pass the seventh mile stone. The old system of electing deacons for life was superseded in 1894 and the deacons elected since that period have been chosen for three years.

Church cards containing useful information, names of committees, invitations to worship in church, topics of sermons and like matter have been used several seasons. The Prime Ancient Society has year after year invited the congregations of the daughter churches to worship in the parish church on Thanksgiving Day. These occasions have been exceedingly enjoyable. The prayer meeting manuals issued by the Congregational Publishing Society are distributed each season throughout the parish. The general public are under great obligations to the church for the shelter which our sheds afford to innumerable horses and

carriages seven days of the week. These convenient refuges placed on ground belonging to the parsonage property were constructed by that good servant of church and town the Chairman of the Building Committee. For many years our church has taken special interest in Mr. Elwood, a missionary connected with the Madura Mission. We assisted in his ordination, and we have welcomed him to this place on more than one occasion. We have shared his support. In 1906 a six months' vacation was given the pastor when a friend sent him and his companion on a happy pilgrimage to Egypt, Palestine, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium and the British Isles. It proved to be a prosperous journey—a time when rich treasure was gathered for service and the old world yielded a rare harvest of enjoyment.

When the Tablet in the vestibule was unveiled the minister returned to the custom of the fathers and wore the Genevan gown—a custom which is now revived in many of our churches.

Two of our young men have entered the ministry. Rev. Charles L. Hill was ordained in this church on June 8th, 1906, and has been for several years a faithful home missionary and pastor in Minnesota. Rev. John M. Deyo, son of one of our deacons, was chosen assistant pastor of the Church of the Redeemer, New Haven, in 1909. Our church has assisted many young men in their preparation for gospel work. Not only the students which we have annually employed at Hope Chapel—some years one and some years two men—perhaps twenty of them altogether—but also students in numerous schools and colleges—students who have received from the Sunday School or by private gifts, scholarships which have enabled them to pursue their studies—perhaps twenty-five of this class.

I do not know a church where the doors swing open more easily—where a more varied and harmonious congregation enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary. The white man and the colored man have a common home with us. There are at least twelve

nationalities represented in these pews or in the chairs of the Sunday School room. And strangers are greeted with cordiality. The seats here are free.

It is a great privilege to have been associated with the workers who have given their love, service, and devotion to this church. It would be hard to find more zealous and helpful people than many whose names are upon our lips. How they have spent their time, their energy, their wisdom, their money, their moral force, their daily prayers, their Christian manhood and womanhood in response to human need and the divine call! They are not few in number who have built their lives into the life of this church and the Church Universal.

And what kindness, what liberality, what patience and sympathy, what stimulating encouragement, what large-minded charity have been manifested in the relation of this people with their pastor!

Freely have they loaned the minister to the public when he was called to serve as Registrar of the Consociation, Corporate Member of the American Board, Local Secretary of the Church Building Society, Trustee of Rollins College, Tougaloo University, and several other institutions of learning, Corresponding Secretary and Trustee of the Francis Asbury Palmer Educational Fund, Trustee of the Aged Christian Minister's Home, Trustee and Officer in several local organizations like the Memorial Library, the Fresh Air Home, the Historical Society, the Gould Vacation Home—freely have they loaned their minister to these and many institutions which sought his services, pleased to share with him and other servants of the Master in this upbuilding of christian society.

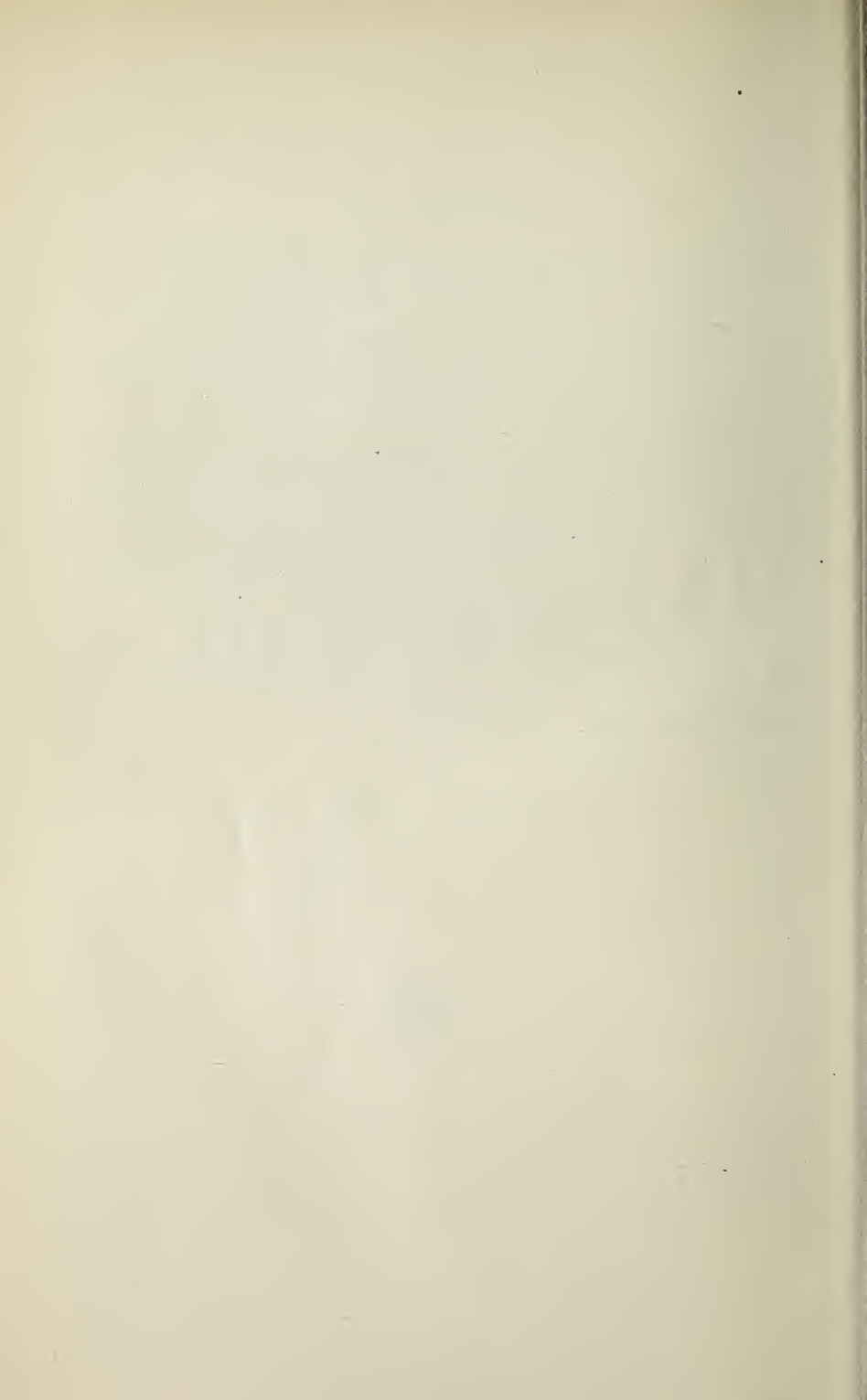
Your present minister is happy in the twenty-second year of his pastorate among this people. Four ministers have served the church a longer period—Noah Hobart forty years, Joseph Webb thirty-six years, Andrew Eliot thirty-one years, and Samuel Wakeman twenty-seven years. But I do not believe that any

other pastor has enjoyed a greater measure of goodwill or received more genuine and tangible expressions of affection.

To-day we are called to face new conditions. There is an influx of people. Life in our town has assumed another phase. How few homes on the main street remind the observer of the former times. This generation presents fresh problems for us to solve here in Fairfield.

What shall be our answer to the demands of the day? Have the changes in our church been along the line of wise adjustment to the work of the present? Are we prepared to adopt such helpful methods and make such needed sacrifices as shall best equip for largest service a church located in an important suburb of a thriving, manufacturing city? It is imperative that we should labor together for the conservation of that ancient, honorable spirit—that atmosphere of culture and worth—that high moral tone and civic eminence—which has characterized Fairfield these many generations.





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